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Screen

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Screen Education is the companion journal to *Screen*, established by the Society for Education in Film and Television five years ago to concentrate on relating film and media theory to educational theory and the actual practice of teaching film and television. *Screen Education's* focus on the definition of the subject matter of film/media studies necessarily entails attention to the ideological and institutional context of British society and its education system – to the educational practice demanded by the constraints of the system, and the ones implied by new definitions of the subject matter cutting across traditional subject demarcations. The problems encountered in the definition of a new subject area have thus forced the journal to go beyond curriculum reform to investigate the content of the knowledge at present authorised by the education system and the educational theory that underpins it, both of which need to be contested.

Recent numbers of *Screen Education*

Number 18, Spring 1976

Special Number on Media Education in Europe, the UNESCO Survey, with articles by Susan Bennett, Jim Cook, Jim Hillier and Douglas Lowndes.

Number 19, Summer 1976

The Viewpoint Controversy; Richard Dyer, Peter Wollen and Robin Wood on the BFI University Film Lectureships; Douglas Lowndes on Screen Education as Ideology; John Tulloch on TV Quiz Shows and the Concept of 'Knowledge'.

Number 20, Autumn 1976

Special Number on the TV crime series *The Sweeney*, with articles by Cary Bazalgette, Edward Buscombe, John Dennington, Richard Patterson, John Tulloch, Phillip Drummond and Geoff Hurd.

Number 21, Winter 1976/7

Special Number on Practical Work, with articles by Terry Dennett and Jo Spence on Photography, Ideology and Education; Hugh Morris, Chris Mottershead, Bob Ferguson and Roger Stephens on practical work in television and media studies; Richard Eke on Doing Film in the Primary School.

For subscriptions and prices, see page 2.



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The course is intended primarily for teachers in secondary and further education, and will take place at the Lancashire College for Adult Education, Southport Road, Chorley PR7 1NB from Monday, 4th – Saturday, 9th April, 1977.

The cost of the course, inclusive of documentation, accommodation and tuition is £35.

For further details and application forms please apply to Lancashire College for Adult Education, Southport Road, Chorley PR7 1NB.

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Editorial

Since the Second World War, film distribution in Britain (and to some extent in the USA) has been a dual structure: a nation-wide major network purveying 'entertainment' film, usually American-produced, but to which the native industry made a subordinate contribution, was accompanied by a largely metropolitan 'art' network, much smaller but receiving a disproportionate amount of critical attention, comprising predominantly foreign-produced, subtitled foreign-language films. It has long been recognised that one of the weaknesses of the British film-production industry (as opposed to its continental analogues) has been its failure to produce a viable 'art' cinema of its own. When the decline of the native industry led the British Film Institute to transform its Experimental Film Fund into a Production Board aiming to produce feature-length films rather than shorts, the then Head of Production of the Board hoped to fill this traditional gap. However, as John Ellis points out in his article on the Production Board in this number of *Screen*, that decline, and the replacement of the cinema by television as the major commercial art, was already undermining the dual structure: a larger and larger proportion of American-produced films have adopted modes derived from the traditional art cinema (see the articles by Steve Neale and Colin McCabe in *Screen* v 17 nn 2 and 3 respectively), while in America and the United Kingdom new types of film production with their embryonic distribution networks have emerged, outside traditional commercial channels, but also (in this country) ill-adapted to traditional institutions of state subsidy like the BFI and the Arts Council.

These new patterns have not yet crystallised, and the emergence of organisations like the Independent Film-makers' Association is to be welcomed as an opportunity to articulate relations between different types of film-making in as productive a manner as possible; there can be no question of attempting to champion one of these types at the expense of the rest. However, if, as John Ellis argues, the Production Board as it has evolved hitherto is unable

- 6 to respond adequately to the new demands made on it, SEFT and its journals, from their very different position, have to modify their strategies to adjust to the new situation too. SEFT's aim has been to provide theories and concepts making it possible to discuss films in the mass circuit without the condescension of traditional criticism or simply applying to them the kind of discourse reserved by that traditional criticism for the 'art' film. This meant a concentration on the narrative cinema, not to celebrate it or denounce it, but to understand its mechanisms and pin-point areas of contradiction in it. But this nearly exclusive concentration on narrative cinema is no longer adequate. The present situation calls for the development of theories and concepts to deal with the much wider range of cinemas which impinge on film-making and viewing internationally today, not to speak of the specific problems of television.

The articles in this and other recent numbers of *Screen* reflect this diversification of interest. Linda Williams follows up her article on metaphor and metonymy in *Screen* v 17 n 1 and draws on concepts developed in recent seminars by Christian Metz to discuss the Prologue to *Un Chien andalou*, a film crucial for the development of the European art cinema and the post-war avant-garde, yet shamefully unrigorously handled in traditional critical literature.

Bill Nichols argues that a much older hypothesis of Metz's, that documentary films depend principally on methods developed in the fictional narrative film, cannot be sustained. Taking as his examples films made by the American Newsreel group, he provides the broad outlines of a theory of the documentary as the 'expository genre', with a different relation between voice and images from that characteristic of the fiction film, yet not offering a radically different position to the spectator. His analysis supports the examination of anthropological films by Mick Eaton and Ivan Ward in *Screen* v 17 n 3.

Future numbers of *Screen* will extend the range of these articles. However, this extension does not imply an abandonment of interest in more traditional narrative cinema. This cinema remains central to film education; narrative forms derived from it have a central place in television fiction, perhaps the contemporary art with the largest audience; narrative film remains arithmetically dominant in the contemporary cinema, and much even of non-narrative film defines its tasks, however negatively, in relation to film narrative; and, last but not least, the theoretical and political problems thrown up by the examination of narrative cinema are by no means exhausted or resolved.

Jacqueline Rose in her article takes up one of these problems: the synthesis of micro-analyses of segments of films which stress the imaginary nature of the symmetry of narrative devices such as shot/counter-shot and macro-analyses of whole films which emphasise Oedipal resolution as a precondition of narrative closure.

She shows in the case of Hitchcock's *The Birds* that the price of this synthesis, and hence its profound imperfection, may be to promote the paranoia latent in the imaginary relationship, and that the asymmetrical character of the Oedipus in the two sexes orients the paranoid aggressivity against the female protagonist.

Stephen Heath, in an article drafted for the *Screen* school on realism, another paper for which (Colin MacCabe's 'Principles of Realism and Pleasure') was published in v 17 n 3, notes the neglect in film analysis drawing on Lacan's reading of Freud of his concept of the 'real' (as opposed to the imaginary and the symbolic). He argues that, since the real in this sense can never be represented by reality (things) or any of its reflections but only by what is wanting in all the terms of the relation between the subject and reality, any attempt to hold political cinema to a form of 'realism' is misplaced; on the other hand, the political consideration of a film, in this case Oshima's *Death by Hanging*, raises as yet unresolved problems for psychoanalysis's tendency to posit the structure constituting the subject, and hence the real that that structure misses, as conceptually prior to anything historical materialism would theorise within the concept of the social formation.

Finally, Rosalind Delmar and Mark Nash in their article consider a group of films produced in China since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in relation to cultural policy in the People's Republic during this period. This re-emphasises a point made by Donald Macpherson in his review of the Edinburgh Film Festival 1976: that the cinema is a more important object than the film, and these films, traditional enough film fictions seen in the context of the National Film Theatre, must be studied in relation to the conditions of their original production and exhibition.

BEN BREWSTER.

The Editorial Board invites the readers of *Screen* to the fourth of its open meetings to discuss the contents of this number of the magazine with the Board and some of the contributors. The meeting will take place on Saturday, March 12 at 11.00 am in the offices of SEFT at 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL.

Production Board Policies

John Ellis

The British Film Institute Production Board exists to make films of an experimental nature outside a directly commercial context. Since 1972 it has had available funds of £120,000 a year. The Board is a voluntary committee within the BFI: it decides on the projects it will back, employs a permanent staff (a Head of Production and four others), and controls a certain amount of basic equipment. It is unique in that profit, cost-effectivity etc do not enter into its considerations. It should therefore have a central role in the creation of 'alternative' cinema forms in this country. In reality, it has been unclear about its aims, amateurish in its workings, and passive in its social role. Until recently, it has been content to try to play a marginal role within the film industry, with the result that most of its products are intended for a market that is closed to them, and have therefore remained unshown. The Board has also consistently misunderstood certain areas of avant-garde film-making which fall outside the categories of this marginalism. It has never properly identified the areas of cinematic activity in which it operates, and has therefore never formulated a policy to which it can be held accountable, assuring some fairness in the distribution of its limited funds.

The Board has recently had a considerable amount of adverse publicity, most of which has concentrated on two of its films, *Pressure* and *Juvenile Liaison*. In an attempt to redress the balance and publicise the overall output of the Board, the BFI has mounted a season of its films at the National Film Theatre, and published an accompanying booklet (*Production Board*) edited by Alan Lovell. The booklet contains answers to a questionnaire sent to film-makers whom the Board has supported, as well as the edited transcripts of an important set of video interviews with current Board members made by Liberation Films. This article draws on these and other sources. When dates are given for films, these dates are those of their completion rather than those of their selection

Operation

The Board's scope is defined by its budget and by its membership. Since 1972, the yearly budget of about £125,000 has been provided by:

1. The BFI, which allocates £95,000 from its block grant from the Department of Education and Science;
2. The Department of Trade, which allocates £30,000 from the Eady money, a fund of approximately £5 million a year drawn from box-office receipts to be allocated straight to producers, from which a certain amount is extracted on the way for the Board, the National Film School and the Children's Film Foundation (this last named body receives, in contrast, about £450,000).

This budget has not been increased since 1972, and its real value has declined to about the level of the pre-1972 budget which was £40,000 a year. Obviously, with these limited funds no 35 mm production can take place; the films are all shot on 16 mm, and the ACTT exempts them from the normal manning regulations that apply to commercial films. This enables an upper cost limit of £20,000 to be imposed on all projects.

The Board itself is officially 'an executive sub-committee of the Board of Governors of the BFI': it is nominally appointed by the Governors, but has total independence in its operations. It is constituted in a bizarre fashion. Michael Relph, the head of the British Film Producers' Association, is the Chairman, because he was invited by the retiring Chairman Sir Michael Balcon: he regards his role on the Board as that of defending the Eady contribution. This appointment is for six years. Other members have a three-year term, and there are usually a dozen chosen by the Head of Production or by the Director of the BFI on the haphazard basis of personal acquaintance etc. These appointments are voluntary and unpaid. Recently, the Governors have resisted an attempt to appoint two members as representatives of the Independent Film-makers' Association: they must act in their 'personal capacity' only.

This system creates major problems. The Head of Production in 1972 bequeathed his policy, enshrined in his choice of Board members, to successive Heads over the following three years. The Board's status as the origin of all major decisions concerning production brings constant friction between their amateurism and the attitudes of the Head of Production and other full-time 'officers of the Board' who are in closer contact with and have an overall picture of the many strands of contemporary low-budget film production. This conflict has been more or less continual for some

time because the majority of the Board have consistently refused to formulate a policy, even in the broadest and most negative terms, which would define the scope and nature of its intentions in relation to current film culture. The Board's actions have been haphazard, and its possibilities have been dissipated by these conflicts and lack of policy. This situation has been exacerbated by the way in which projects were chosen between 1972 and 1975.

The selection procedure was, until 1976, the most passive of all modes open to the Board. Scripts or treatments were submitted; no consistent attempt was made to solicit projects from groups or individuals. Neither was much attempt made to publicise the existence of the Production Fund, as is evidenced by the sudden rush of applications after recent publicity in the *Sunday Times*, *Time Out* etc. Once received, the projects were studied by individual Board members and, if they gained the support of one member, were submitted for the consideration of the whole group. This last procedure, which is still followed, demands a large amount of work from the voluntary Board members: there were 230 scripts submitted for 1975-76, and perhaps a hundred usually go forward for discussion by the whole Board. This means that it is in effect restricted to the consideration of individual projects. Until 1976, the £120,000 fund was treated at these discussions as 'money available': projects were matched to the amount remaining in the fund at the particular time at which they were considered. It was a matter of dispensing patronage until the fund was exhausted. This passive mode of operation supported the dominant aesthetic of the Board, an aesthetic of 'talent', 'quality', 'merit' and 'personal taste'. The selection procedure has now been altered, not through any desire for change on the Board's part, but because the BFI accountancy procedures (at Government insistence) demand that money is spent during the year for which it is allocated. So the Board is now forced to select a year's programme of films each April, and selection is based on comparison, even competition, between projects. Although this procedure carries with it the possibility of formulating an overall policy, this has still been resisted, at least for this year's selections. The balance of power between various policies and aesthetics, examined below, explains this state of affairs.

The role of the Head of Production and the Board's other staff in the procedure is influential but by no means decisive. Projects are sometimes drawn up and usually budgeted in consultation with the staff. They can argue the case for certain projects or even, as successive Heads have tried, coax the Board into adopting a definite policy. However, the final decision is the Board's own, and despite the volume of work demanded this is a jealously guarded right.

Film production takes two forms: 'experimental' films, usually made by one person, are given a grant for materials alone, leaving this form of film-making in a small-scale artisanal mode. Those

- 12 which fit the loose categories of feature, theatrical film or documentary have a para-commercial budgeting. Professional technicians are employed, the film-makers paid for the duration of shooting etc. This means that large amounts of money are entrusted to film-makers who are often very inexperienced, and the Board in the past took two measures to avoid abortive projects. Test sequences were sometimes commissioned, but these were discontinued as the value of the fund decreased. Script-development grants were given in some cases, but these were often spent with no great result, and have also been discontinued. The result is that normal commercial conditions apply to these films: the film-makers have to support themselves whilst working on scripts, as they draw wages only for the (necessarily short) duration of shooting and editing. In addition, it is not standard practice for the Board to offer help in the form of discussions during scripting etc, although this was done in the case of *Pressure* (1976). This state of affairs often leads to a feverish improvisation during the shooting stage even of experimental works, and the resultant film often loses coherence (of textual space) and accuracy (of research). There is no easy solution to this problem, but it is only exacerbated by the chronic shortage of funds, the speed at which films have to be made, the total lack of opportunities for consultation with Board members, and the very way that film projects are conceived in terms of personal ownership. It is very difficult to work cooperatively, sharing the burden of script development, research, and shooting decisions. Even those film groups that have made films for the Board have undergone large-scale changes up to and during production. It is possible to conceive of a film as a group, but problems inevitably arise in shooting. A sudden burst of intensive work is needed, and this can threaten the cohesiveness of the group. But the main cause is the division of labour enshrined in the equipment and difficulties with technicians whose aesthetics in their defined fields are inevitably formed by the demands of the dominant industry for which they usually work. Group projects often end in disarray because the film-makers are faced with a multitude of decisions that need to be taken quickly, and because those with the technical expertise (including actors etc) often find it difficult to understand what is asked of them. *Justine* (1975) is an example: it is as though it were constantly shifting focus between two films: the one it clearly ought to be (a film in the manner of Straub), and the film of the problems of making such a film cooperatively with a low budget. As a commodity, a film to be seen 'in itself and for itself', it is therefore spoiled, although it remains the most interesting of the Board's output to date. As a film offered to be read it reveals the inscription of all the problems of making a radical or 'alternative' cinema under present conditions in Britain. Here again the Production Board with its growing experience of funding such group projects could offer valuable help.

Alan Lovell's pamphlet is full of complaints from film-makers about the distribution of the films. The Board as a group never view 'their' completed films, not bothering with such an opportunity for criticism of individual projects or of their overall output. The films are abandoned, thrown onto the market, left to find a distributor if they can, or otherwise to be distributed by the BFI distribution services which have no mechanism for promoting them. Some experimental and agit-prop films are given to the film-makers to distribute themselves, otherwise the BFI retains copyright and undertakes to share any profits with the film-makers on a 50/50 basis. No film has yet made a profit because of the highly unsatisfactory distribution arrangement. The recent appointment of a Promotions Officer is an attempt to improve this situation.

Art-film distributors have taken some of the earlier films (eg Bill Douglas), but most remain unseen. Large commercial distributors are not interested; small-scale operators cannot afford to blow up the 16 mm negatives to 35 mm, and 35 mm exhibition is necessary before the film can be launched on the still embryonic 16 mm circuit in Britain: 35 mm gets publicity, gives the film a commercial currency, and at least pays the cost if a film succeeds. So a film like *Pressure*, a film with considerable propaganda value at the moment, remains unshown because there are no funds available to provide the distributor with a 35 mm negative. The National Film Finance Corporation has refused to contribute the necessary £10,000. This situation is compounded by difficulties with American distribution: the Board has an exclusive contract with Films Inc who, it is acknowledged, have no interest or expertise in many of the areas of the Board's work. The BFI renewed this contract in May 1975 *without consulting the Board*. These problems and incompetences ensure that almost all of the Board's productions are never exhibited, even in London.

Documentary films are in a slightly better position. *Welcome to Britain* (1976), a piece of investigatory journalism, has been shown at the Gate cinema and sold to the BBC for £2,500. It is possible under current conditions for such a documentary to make its costs back from TV showings in Britain, America and Germany, and to make sizeable profits from theatrical and educational exhibition. Ideally, it is almost possible for the Board to set up a revolving fund for documentary production, which would be more or less self-financing. This is the one component of the Board's current activities which can survive on the fringes of the industry (and thus could cause problems, both with the unions over manning, and with the BFI over the non-commercial status of the fund). For all other kinds of film, this naive attitude to distribution has been an acknowledged disaster.

The new Promotions Officer has the task of ensuring that films are distributed by giving them suitable publicity in the specialised areas to which they are addressed. The film bookings and other

- 14 administrative tasks are then to be handled by the BFI's distribution infrastructure. This new policy has two advantages. First, it at last acknowledges that the Board is not a marginal institution within the industry, offering it back the crumbs that have been dropped 'by mistake' from its table. It is rather a part of a still embryonic alternative circuit of specialised 16 mm distribution, and as the only large-scale producer in that circuit has to play an active role in forming a public for its films. The second aspect of this decision is financial: films will no longer be sold for a lump sum to a distributor who then keeps any profit from their exploitation. All income apart from the costs of operating the BFI's booking, dispatch and servicing mechanisms reverts straight to the Board and begins to defray the costs of prints and production. It is no longer 'lost' in the byways of distributors' accounts. This distribution policy should thus strengthen the Board as a production facility, promote the exhibition circuits and advance the awareness of their audiences.

This decision about distribution, like other recent changes, has been made under the pressure of circumstances, not as the result of a coherent policy of working towards any kind(s) of alternative cinema. It is this lack of expressed policy which has bedevilled the Board's operations, and has perpetuated the old procedures.

Policy

In Britain, since the mid-1960's, the notion of 'art cinema', which designates a mode of exhibition and appreciation of sensitive/profound/unusual/foreign/subtitled/controversial feature films, has no longer described that area of cinema which falls outside the operation of the major production/distribution/exhibition companies. Two instances illustrate this: the foundation of the London Film-makers' Co-op on October 13, 1966; and the film-making activities of the agit-prop group Cinema Action since 1968. These two groups lie at different limits of an extraordinarily rich field of cinematic activity: Cinema Action seeks to use film instrumentally in the context of immediate political struggles; the Co-op attempts to interrogate the very nature of the experience of cinema itself, the 'conditions of illusion'. These do not exhaust the forms of alternative cinema. Non-cinema, non-TV documentary includes not only agit-prop films like those of Cinema Action or the Newsreel Group, but also propaganda films which develop political lines in relation to an overall situation (eg *The Amazing Equal Pay Show*); recently there has been some attempt by such films to interrogate the very concepts of 'struggle' and 'documentary' upon which they are based (*The Nightcleaners* 1 and 2). Further, a type of theoretical film has recently emerged which attempts a radical

interrogation of ideological practice (*Penthesilea*). A many-sided avant-garde cinema adopts various strategies of deconstruction of narrativity, of textual coherence etc (eg *Justine*, Steve Dwoskin's films). Each of these kinds of film implies a different audience, a different mode of exhibition; together they are given the umbrella designation 'alternative cinema' or 'independent cinema': definitions which are negative (not 'dominant ideology', not produced for profit) because no positive definition can contain their diversity. It is not possible here to give a more extensive survey of this diversity (a clear picture can be gained from *After-image* 6), let alone an assessment of its contradictions: it is merely a question of enumerating the various aesthetics which have been current in the Board's area of operation (which they have defined as sponsoring 'films that the industry has refused or ignored') during the current period of activity, since the decision to produce feature as well as short films in 1972. This is necessary since the Board has always claimed to be open to all comers, to have no aesthetic policy other than the personal taste of its members, their belief in the film-maker's talents, the merits of the project etc. In reality, the whole of independent cinema has never had equal access to the Board's finances, precisely because of these attitudes: specific policies have always been adopted. The refusal to define criteria has always been justified as necessary if the Board is to remain open to all forms of cinema; in fact, it has tended to exclude the aesthetic avant-garde and to privilege documentary modes.

When pushed to make statements about criteria and policy (eg by Liberation Films), the majority of the Board reply, like Jenny Barraclough: 'Even there where we tried so hard to restrict ourselves and to have a policy that we would only support this kind of film [ie by excluding films seen as "an extension of social work"], pretty soon once again we were saying that in the end perhaps the only policy is to try to just take the best ideas and the best projects that come in, absolutely regardless of whether they fit into certain groups' (*Production Board*, p 24). The policy is to take projects that come in, and not actively to solicit certain forms of film-making, or to encourage individuals and groups to produce ideas and perhaps even to collaborate. The latter approach is open to the Head of Production if he chooses to adopt it, and has the time, but policy is seen as a restriction of the Board's freedom of movement and selection: the aim is to receive and consider everything, to solicit and prejudice nothing. It is an extreme form of liberalism, intended to assuage guilt at having to select at all. What slides in behind this liberalism is a set of aggressive criteria, themselves disguised in the bland vocabulary of 'the best'. Personal reaction to projects is the deciding factor, expressed in terms of 'talent' about applicants, 'quality' about projects, and 'merit' as a judgement of comparison with projects perceived as similar. The personal, inaccessible nature of these criteria is

16 fiercely defended, with two arguments: that it is impossible to discuss criteria in the abstract, and that as the committee consists of people with very different ideas, then the confluence of these ideas and personal reactions is what constitutes any policy. In theory, then, the spread of individuals secures a spread of views over the whole of alternative film culture. In fact, as the Liberation Films tape demonstrates, there is no such spread, as almost all the Board members belong either to a documentary or to a narrative-fiction tradition. There has never been more than one representative of the avant-garde, first Malcolm LeGrice, and now Tony Rayns. The selection function of the Board has thus consistently been tied to the aesthetics current in institutional film and TV practice: the majority of the present Board have often confessed themselves incapable of understanding the work of an established film-maker like Peter Gidal (a review of his position can be found in *Afterimage* 6), and a minority of them, including some involved in documentary production, described *Nightcleaners 1* as either insignificant and unoriginal, or inept, and voted against an application for the second part of the film. Personal criteria thus operate in favour of certain projects and against others, and ensure that the Board remains marginal to the feature-film industry rather than actively participating in the development of an alternative film culture. This marginality is enshrined in the majority definition of the Board's functions: to seek new talent and enable it to gain an expression, and to enable the talented to make those films which the feature industry has refused or ignored.

The exercise of this policy can be influenced by the current Head of Production: there is a policy associated with Mamoun Hassan (1972-74); Barrie Gavin (1974-75) was able to push for an increased patronage of documentary films but was unsuccessful in gaining consistent support for the avant-garde. Mamoun Hassan was able to appoint a sufficient number of members sympathetic to his policy to enable him to operate with few problems until the value of the budget began to decline. Both Barrie Gavin and Peter Sainsbury, the present Head, have had more problems with this committee because its standards and aims are those of marginality rather than alternatives. The result is that the Board's output of feature and short films over the period tends to fall into two groups which had an easy passage towards acceptance: low-budget art feature films accepted under Hassan, and various types of documentary from *cinéma-vérité* to agit-prop accepted under Gavin. In addition, various avant-garde projects have with difficulty received some patronage since 1974. There are some economic reasons why the shift from an art to a documentary focus took place around 1973-74: the Board's grant remained constant whilst costs escalated, so that it was no longer possible to produce a fiction feature for less than £20,000, even on 16 mm and without meeting union manning requirements. Secondly, documentary offers

less likelihood of abortive projects, as its dominant rationale is the empirical observation of the extra-filmic rather than the creation of a filmic systematicity. Documentary needs less labour, less invention, and a greater reliance on the immediate skills of a crew experienced in documentary modes. But just as important from the Board's point of view are their own abilities in this field, which enable them to assess a project from two points of view: that of the (often political) importance of the subject matter, and the possibility of its being accepted for production by a TV company, in which case they refuse it.

The Board's art-film policy produced such films as Bill Douglas's trilogy *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk*, and the still uncompleted *My Way Home* (1972-7), Brownlow and Mollo's *Winstanley* (1975), Peter Smith's *A Private Enterprise* (1974), David Gladwell's *Requiem for a Village* (1974) etc. These have received enough attention from the film critics to make any detailed description unnecessary. They share characteristics which mirror their conditions of production, though this may well be coincidental since they are standard features of art cinema: a concern with marginal figures (*A Private Enterprise*: an Asian out of step with the militancy of his fellow-workers, the traditional attitudes of the Asian petty-bourgeoisie, and with British bourgeois culture); a recreation of the irrecoverable past (Douglas's depressed working-class Scotland, *Winstanley*'s commune, Gladwell's requiem); a stripping away of the expensive surface trickery of straight commercial films (the slowness and visual sparseness of Douglas, Brownlow and Mollo's use of amateur actors etc), but a retention of orthodox narrativity and its positionality. Mamoun Hassan's policy in producing these films was to demonstrate to the dominant feature industry that it was possible to make small-scale art films in Britain, to act as a spur to private capital to extract both profit and prestige from creating such an area of production. Unfortunately, the inefficiency of the BFI distribution department conspired with the disinterest of private capital to ensure that the commercial career of these films has been ignominious.

One feature film does not fit the traditional art-film category because of its political commitment: Horace Ové's *Pressure* (1976), much debated in the press and not seen outside film festivals and the NFT. It adopts the socialist-realist strategy of showing the typical, a sixteen-year-old British-born black experiencing the racism of the world outside school and then becoming involved in all the various subcultural and political activities that are open to someone in his position. One of its strategies is to undercut narrative expectations by anticlimax. It remains the Board's single excursion into the political use of the realist narrative.

Political commitment is much more marked in the Board's documentary output. It has funded a variety of styles, justified either by appeal to technical innovation or by the merit of the

18 subject. There is no resistance to left-wing commitment, to the various Trotskyist or workerist currents that predominate at the moment; because these films operate within conventional documentary categories the Board finds little difficulty in funding them, and thus demonstrates its liberalism. Its resistance is to any form of deconstruction or interrogation of the cinematic experience itself. The Berwick Street group's two films *Ireland Behind the Wire* and *Nightcleaners* demonstrate this. The first received a completion grant with no questioning of its political line (which prompted the lab to send a copy to the Ministry of Defence complaining that it was 'anti-British'). On the contrary, there was some disappointment expressed that the film seemed more simplistic than the accompanying documentation, which assumed that the fairly conventional form adopted was capable of 'carrying' greater sophistication of analysis. Yet when the group attempted to give a more complex and inclusive analysis in their film of the night-cleaners' campaign they were led to interrogate the stratification of voices in the filmic discourse (see *Screen* Winter 1975-76, pp 101-18). The reaction of Board members to this was to condemn the film outright, and the second half of the project was only funded when the general importance of such 'formal experimentation' was argued strongly by a minority.

Several forms of documentary have been funded: the criteria have often been based on the impossibility of such a project being set up by a TV company: hence *Welcome to Britain* (1976), which breaks the cautious TV criteria of 'balanced reporting' with its investigation of immigration laws through the figure of a flamboyant immigration consultant. *Juvenile Liaison* (1975) was funded because its cinéma-vérité techniques were considered too advanced for TV. This film was at the centre of a political row when the police tried to bring pressure to bear to suppress its 'objective' revelations of their scheme for the treatment of minors. They were able to produce statements from participants in the film refusing their permission for public showing. On legal advice, this was accepted by the BFI Governors, who agreed not to distribute the film. The Board resisted angrily – for them any form of censorship of film content is unacceptable. The film is now distributed to specialised audiences only, that is to anyone interested in its form or its content for professional or other reasons. Other documentaries have been designed to intervene in a situation rather than merely expose it. The Newsreel Collective's films (1975-76) were an attempt to recreate a cinema that dealt with immediate political issues: the results are confused and dangerously simplistic, based on the workerist couple of oppression by bosses/struggle by workers (eg *Abortion*, *Housey Housey*). Their grant has not been renewed on the grounds that it is doubtful whether the films have promoted much discussion, even though they have gained a wide distribution. Such criteria of political effectivity and sophisti-

cation of argument are repeatedly applied by the Board to agit-prop and propaganda films, and with propaganda projects concern is repeatedly expressed that the level of sophistication of analysis is suitable for agit-prop rather than a substantial film.

The cinema of deconstruction, of the London Film-makers' Co-op, of films like *Nightcleaners* or *Justine* has a far more difficult and arbitrary passage. Examples are numerous: Chris Welsby's *Windvane II* (1976) was rejected after such a desultory discussion that some members insisted that it should be resubmitted. Mike Dunford's *Terminal Aphasia* was passed only because the incomprehension or hostility of many members was countered by reference to the importance of the project to that area of film, and to the fact that such attitudes are accepted practice in the rest of the modern arts. This represents a clash of criteria that is becoming more frequent: arguments of personal taste and judgement are countered with arguments about the importance of different forms of film-making and the importance of certain projects to their development. Personal reaction is confronted with strategic considerations. It is to be hoped that this trend continues, for the problem with the Board's past treatment of the avant-garde is that responsibility has been delegated more or less to the 'avant-garde representative'. The Board as a whole has been unable to understand a cinema which deconstructs the coherence of textual experience and repositions the viewing subject; which interrogates narrativity and representation, and which refuses the hierarchy of voices which position the subject as the place of their intention. This cinema has only recently been represented in the Board's output: by *Justine* (1975) and also, in part, by *Resistances* (1976). Nor has it been able to understand a cinema that interrogates the taken-for-granted nature of the experience of cinema itself; which deconstructs the more or less unquestioned arrangements of admission, seating, projection, image, frame and focus as well as the notion of an imaginary image which is seen and yet pretends not to be seen. This cinema too has only recently appeared in the Board's output, through individual films and in a block grant to the Co-op for the purchase of equipment. It is clear that such films have not had an easy passage, that it has been far easier for the Board to accept openly revolutionary content than a politicisation of what they consider to be form. It is also clear that this is an ideological position rather than an effect of the passive mode of selection, for when a programme of production was drawn up for 1976-77, the same bias revealed itself.

Current Productions

As explained above, a new selection procedure was adopted for

20 the financial year 1976-77. The number of uncompleted projects outstanding meant that no new work was undertaken between September 1975 and April 1976. Instead, a shortlist of projects was drawn up by the Board from those submitted during that time, and the budget was allocated between them by vote. The original shortlist had twenty-four projects, nine under £10,000, eight under £18,000, and six between £18,000 and £21,000, plus one which had been withdrawn. Some of the lowest budgets were for completion grants for films virtually at the editing stage. This was whittled down to a further shortlist of ten. Of these, seven were priced between £17,000 and £20,000, and two of the other three were completion grants only. The competitive selection procedure, adopted without real consideration, in which twenty-four projects had to be reduced to a final list of about six, favoured larger budget productions rather than smaller: large-budget films are inevitably more impressive in this situation. This would be (fairly rough) justice if all the various modes of independent film-making had the same financial procedures and pretensions. But the Co-op cinema exists on a more modest financial basis, and amongst the rejected projects appears the only expanded cinema project to have reached the shortlist. Clearly, open competition as practised here has proved even more discriminatory than the old procedure, where at least special pleading had gained funds for several Co-op films.

The eventual selection reveals even more clearly the operation, through the consensus of Board members, of a set of covert criteria. The final production programme is this:

Existing commitments

Vera Neubauer	£6,650
Cinema Action	£4,500

Selected projects

Completion grants: <i>Death of a Pit</i>	£5,800
<i>M'Homes</i>	£1,590

Entire projects:

<i>Exiles</i> (Maurice Hatton)	£19,500
<i>Let Your Hair Down</i> (London Women's Film Group)	£18,000 (over two years)
<i>Riddles of the Sphinx</i> (Mulvey/Wollen)	£19,300
<i>Before Hindsight</i> (Lewis/Taylor-Mead)	£17,000

Thus the budget is overwhelmingly concentrated in four projects which are given £73,000 of the £91,000 allocated. As these films are nowhere near completion (one is only an outline), it is pointless to assess them as completed projects. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest what appealed to the Board *in the applications*.

There is one example of avant-garde deconstruction: *Riddles of the Sphinx*, a project that extends and revises the work of *Penthesilea* (see *Screen* v 15 n 3, Autumn 1974, pp 120-134). As is customary, some members remarked that they were unsure of the

importance of this area of film. The London Women's Film Group application also proposes a work of deconstruction, but of a more acceptable kind. It outlines a film which examines, criticises and reworks the fairy tale *Rapunzel*, retelling the narrative in various different versions, different genres of filming and with different stereotypes. This is a marked advance in feminist film-making in this country, hitherto dominated by documentarism and agit-prop. The work on narrative that is proposed (work of a comparative nature) is acceptable to the Board's aesthetic because it seems to be preserving the position of the reader as the organiser of the various discourses that are offered successively. 21

The other projects have some kind of documentarist bias. *Death of a Pit* records the closure of a Welsh colliery. *Before Hindsight* aims to examine how British newsreels dealt with the period 1936-39 through interviews and textual analysis. *M'Homes* is a humanistic examination of a repressive Belgian children's home using a style somewhat similar to that of Vigo. *Exiles* is proposed as an examination of émigré groups in London beginning from documentary footage, and then developing passages of drama to be scripted by Howard Benton.

Thus it can be seen that, with the exception of *Riddles of the Sphinx*, documentary and permutations upon classical narrative again command the field. The policy of selecting according to merit thus has two results, given the new procedure. First, it tends to eliminate small-budget films, simply because they appear less impressive, so that along with more conventional short films, the films associated with the Co-op also disappear. Second, the competition between projects makes the Board's bias towards documentary and narrative-based cinema more pronounced because there is less chance that the arguments of 'importance', 'acceptance of such practices in the other arts', etc, can carry as much weight as they used to. The bias towards accepted aesthetic practices becomes at once more institutionalised and more pronounced.

Conclusions

Behind the liberal stance of the Board, there lurks a formidable aesthetic policy. The liberal stance means that any 'accusation' that there is a policy is rebutted by appeals to the films that have been produced (some of which are avant-garde productions); to the diversity of interests represented on the Board; and to the inevitably authoritarian nature of any blanket pronouncements that could be made about policy. Some attempts are being made to rectify the position within its own terms: two representatives of the Independent Film-makers' Association are being appointed to the Board (in their personal capacity), and a 'policy statement'

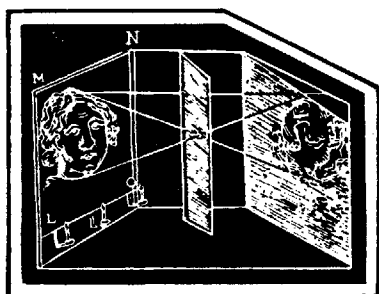
22 of sorts has been produced for the guidance of applicants: it consists entirely of negative formulations about the kind of projects that the Board is *not* concerned with.

However, this merely prolongs the present position, and provides no guarantee that the Board will not continue to finance independent productions in a quite haphazard manner. Its intervention into independent film culture has to be thought through as an intervention, and not merely as funding this or that project. The Board must have a pluralist policy, and there is no question of funding only one area of cinema; the problem with the current mode of operation (whose aesthetic preferences are enshrined in the mode of selection and operation) is that it claims to be pluralist and is not. A really pluralist policy would acknowledge that several areas of independent film-making exist, and then tailor its choice of projects or its commissioning of projects to what it sees as the needs of each area. This involves several forms of financing, some of which have already been adopted on an *ad hoc* basis: grants to film-makers to continue their work, continued subsidy to agit-prop groups etc. Equally, it implies a different mode of operation for the Board itself: not so much the selection of individual projects but rather a consistent (personal) involvement with areas of film-making so that the Board as a whole can work out (and not have by 'instinct') an overall conception of what is happening and what is being attempted. It would then be possible for some projects to be commissioned rather than received, in the sense that the Board would be involved in the stage of the elaboration of ideas and the evolution of groups before an official application was made. It also implies that the Board would be involved in the production and distribution/exhibition of the films it produces: involved in production in that constructive discussion of projects could (though would not have to) take place during the scripting, shooting and editing; involved in distribution/exhibition in that this is the point at which the Board could be publicly accountable for its policy towards the different audiences it served and attempted to develop. At the moment, the Board's function is confined to selection: members are virtually never involved in production, and normally do not see the finished films they have backed. They certainly never have to account for their policy to audiences at screenings.

These proposals are proposals for a Board whose members are actively involved, critically or practically, in the independent film culture that has been developing since the mid-1960's. The present Board was relevant to the previous era when no such culture existed, and attempts to make an independent culture were confined to the creation of an art cinema within the normal commercial market. Such a form of subsidy has failed, and a new form of intervention is needed, and with it a new form of Production Board whose meetings would be concerned with the overall strategy

of their activities, with the development of chosen projects, and with the reactions and suggestions of the audiences for these projects. Selection would be of relatively minor moment in this schema, as it could be done from a shortlist prepared by the staff in accordance with expressed policy. The time that Board members currently spend reading scripts 97.5 per cent of which they will reject could be put to more productive use. It would also mean a redistribution of functions between the Board and its officers, with the officers being concerned with the implementation of policy rather than having to await the decision of the Board on any substantial issue as at present, a system that causes much friction. In this way the Board would no longer be an amateurish body remote from alternative cinema, but a body with a beneficial influence and great accountability to film-makers and audiences alike.

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camera obscura

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The Prologue to *Un Chien Andalou*: a Surrealist Film Metaphor*

Linda Williams

In a previous *Screen* article (Spring 1976) on the function of metaphor and metonymy in two films by Alain Resnais, I made some observations on the deployment of these two basic figures that Roman Jakobson, in 'Two Types of Aphasia' (*Selected Writings*, The Hague 1971, Vol II), distilled from the multitude that once formed the body of classical rhetoric. Since the writing of that article, work by Christian Metz on film rhetoric (part of Metz's current seminar, to be published in 1977) has revealed many subtleties and problems in Jakobson's regrouping of classical rhetoric into a larger binary opposition of metaphor and metonymy. Not the least of these problems is the primarily tropic sense in which we understand these terms; a sense which loses much of its precision once we begin to apply it to cinematic texts from which the word as a unit of discourse is absent.

Another major problem that Metz points out in his analysis of Jakobsonian metaphor and metonymy is the tendency to confuse the referential axis of rhetoric with the discursive axis of linguistics. My own analysis of metaphor in *Hiroshima mon amour* and metonymy in *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* suffers from this confusion, to which Jakobson himself intermittently succumbs. What usually happens in such analyses is that, since the phenomenon of contiguity is common to both metonymy and syntagm, contiguity of the discourse (syntagm) is confused with contiguity of the referent (metonymy). In like manner, since similarity or contrast is common to both metaphor and paradigm, it is easy to confuse similarity or contrast of the discourse (paradigm) with that of the referent (metaphor). Very commonly in critical practice this means that the observations made about metonymy are actually pertinent

* I should like to thank Phillip Drummond for his criticisms of an earlier draft of this article.

to a discussion of syntagm, while the observations about metaphor are pertinent to paradigm. Proof of this confusion is often provided in the tacit assumption that metonymies, like syntagma, are always spread out along the horizontal axis of the discourse, while metaphors, like paradigma, can only appear vertically as implied but absent terms. Thus Jacques Lacan ('L'Instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient' translated in Ehrmann, ed: *Structuralism*, New York 1970) writes that a metaphor is only a metaphor when one term has come to replace another, implied but absent term of the signifying chain. This is tantamount to saying that the phrase 'my love, my flame', in which both terms of the metaphoric similarity are given, is not a metaphor, while 'my flame' given alone as a substitute for the absent term 'my love' is genuinely metaphoric. For Lacan, substitutability is the very definition of metaphor.

Christian Metz's contribution to the solution of this problem is to preserve the primary categories of metaphor and metonymy while providing the stipulation as to how the figure is deployed on the level of the discourse. Thus, out of Jakobson's binary division Metz develops a four-part rhetorico-linguistic classification consisting of: metaphors placed in syntagm ('my love, my flame . . .'), metaphors placed in paradigm ('my flame . . .'), metonymies placed in syntagm ('one hundred ships, one hundred sails . . .'), and metonymies placed in paradigm ('one hundred sails . . .'). The usefulness of such distinctions will hopefully become evident in the analysis of the *Chien Andalou* metaphor that follows.

Another temptation, arising from what could be termed an over-enthusiastic response to Jakobson's very suggestive theories, is the desire to prove the aptness of a particular figure to express a particular theme. But as Metz shows, the figures themselves need not be confused with the themes they present. The *work* of the figure is not the same thing as its content. It seems to me that if we can avoid the temptation to use the figure as a tool in the hunt for the theme, it may be possible to focus on a different aspect of figuration; that is, on the special relation of *some* kinds of figures to the rest of their discourse. Here, I propose a distinction between metaphors and metonymies, whether in paradigm or syntagm, that comment connotatively upon the denotation of the narrative, and metaphors and metonymies, in paradigm or syntagm, whose unfolding actually generates the diegesis. This is a distinction between what could be called referential and non-referential figures. A referential figure allows the viewer to construct a connotative system around the two elements of the figure. This system functions as a comment upon the action of the diegesis. A non-referential, or autonomous figure, on the other hand, points not at the hypothetical 'reality' of the story, but at itself as the creator of the discourse. It, too, can be either a metaphor or a metonymy and can be placed in paradigm or syntagm. This distinction can

- 26 be valuable as a way of describing the peculiar features of certain kinds of 'avant-garde', though still apparently narrative films.

It is with this distinction in mind that I propose the following analysis of the prologue to *Un Chien andalou*. I chose this prologue because its famous metaphor of the moon and eye is perhaps the most often cited example of filmic surrealism, and because its position as prologue not only to this film but to all subsequent surrealist film gives it a privileged position. It is rather like Freud's description in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, of certain kinds of 'introductory dreams' that establish a certain state of affairs out of which the 'principal clause' dreams develop.

Description of the Prologue

This prologue is composed of what appears to be an entire scene played out in the space on and near a balcony bathed in moonlight. It begins with the title, 'Il était une fois', a fairy-tale time reference contradicted both by the contemporary quality of the subsequent images and by the confusing specificity of all the subsequent time references through the film.

Apart from this title there are only twelve shots in the sequence. The following is a numbered description of each shot, including a camera-distance scale ranging from extreme close-up, through close-up, medium shot and long shot.

Title: *Il était une fois* . . .

Shot	Description	Scale
1	Fade in on two hands sharpening a long razor on a strop attached to the door-handle of a French-window. Hands are viewed from above and behind, not exactly the man's point of view, but close. Four strokes of the razor. Cut.	Close-up
2	Head and shoulders of man, cigarette in mouth, eyes lowered, in three-quarter right profile. The man is wearing a striped collarless shirt. A curtained window is visible to right of frame. Cut.	Close-up
3	As in 1. Razor blade is tested on the thumbnail of the left hand. Cut.	Close-up
4	As in 2. Cut.	Close-up
5	Man in left profile standing before window-door with curtains. He looks at strop, razor, then opens window-door to go outside. Cut.	Medium

6	Longer reverse frontal of balcony and man entering it. He looks about and out across balcony (in general direction of spectator) and walks to edge where he leans on railing, razor still in hand. Cut.	Medium	27
7	Head and shoulders of man in three-quarter right profile. He raises head to look up. Cut.	Close-up	
8	Dark sky with moon on screen left. A horizontal sliver of a cloud approaches from the right. Cut.	Long shot	
9	As in 7. Cut.		
10	Direct frontal view of woman's face staring at spectator. To left and slightly behind is torso of man wearing striped shirt, a diagonally striped tie, and no watch. As his left hand holds open her left eye his right hand moves in front of the lower part of her face, as if preparing to draw razor across the round exposed eye. Cut.	Close-up	
11	As in 8. The cloud now passes before the moon. Cut.	Long shot	
12	The eye with thumb and forefinger holding it open. The razor slices it open. A jelly-like substance spills out. Cut.	Extreme close-up	

Shots 1-4

The prologue opens on a downward-looking close-up of a man's hands sharpening a long razor on a strop. (The four strokes of this sharpening correspond to the four-shot alternating syntagm of the entire sharpening action.) In shot 2 (close-up of a man's head and shoulders, cigarette in mouth) it is only by the downward direction of the man's glance that we infer the diegetic contiguity of shots 1 and 2, ie that these hands and arms are connected to the head and shoulders which follow. Shots 3 and 4 repeat this same procedure with the slight difference in shot 4 that the razor is now tested for sharpness on the thumbnail of the left hand. This is the first instance of a round shape intersected by a horizontal line. Though shots 1 and 3 (looking down on the razor and hands) are not viewed from precisely the same angle at which the man would see them, the downward angle of the shot, from above and behind the hands and a little to the left, does approximate to the subjective viewpoint of his glance.

So far the diegetic action of a man sharpening a razor has been placed in an alternating syntagm characterised by the organisation of isolated fragments of space leading to the inference of their connection in a larger whole. But already there are problems in

- 28 this inference. If we look closely at the relation of the arms and hands to the French-window door and curtain in shots 1 and 3, we see that the man's position in relation to the curtained window close behind his head in shots 2 and 4 is spatially different in relation to what is presumably the same curtained window-door in shots 1 and 3. Though barely noticeable here, it marks the beginning of what will become more serious ruptures of our tendency to infer the syntagmatic connection of shots in the discourse as having a parallel connection in the diegesis.

Shots 5 and 6

The repetition of close-ups in shots 1-4 gives way in the middle of the prologue to two medium shots. These shots reinforce the spectator's previous inference as to the contiguity of hands and arms (1 and 3) to head and shoulders (2 and 4) by showing the whole person and the general scene through which he moves. In shot 6 the French-window doors behind the man form a horizontal line that intersects his head at exactly eye-level. This is the second instance of a horizontal line that bisects a round shape.

Shots 7-12

At first sight shots 7, 8, and 9 seem about to repeat the alternating syntagm of shots 1-4 in which the man's glance is alternated with the object he sees in a four-shot series. But there are two important differences: In the first series the order is object-seen + glance, while here it is the more usual glance (the man looks upward at the night sky) + object (insert of the moon). Second, and more importantly, as soon as it seems established the pattern of the syntagm is interrupted. Just at the point where the pattern glance + moon, glance + . . . creates our anticipation of a return to the moon in order to continue the already-begun movement of the cloud across the moon, an entirely new element is introduced: a close-up of a woman's face (shot 10). The woman is staring directly at the spectator with the torso of a/the man standing beside her preparing to cut open her eye. Instead of the anticipated completion of one diegetic action – the movement of the cloud across the moon – the beginning of another, formally similar action is introduced. This new action, like the movement of the clouds before the moon, finally completed in shot 11, is also divided into two alternating shots, culminating in the final shot of the extreme close-up of the eye-cutting.

Because it is an action divided into the same kind of alternating two-shot syntagm as the movement of the clouds across the moon, this new element of the eye-cutting at first *seems* consistent with the prevalence of continuous diegetic relations in the rest of the prologue. In other words, we tend to read this action as taking

place in the continuous diegetic space of the balcony and night sky. But at the same time there is no real indication that this woman whose eye is about to be cut is placed in this diegetic space. We only infer it on the basis of the general contiguity of the previous syntagma. We tend to assume, for example, that the torso of the man standing beside her in shot 10 holding a razor and wearing a striped shirt is the *same* man we have viewed throughout the prologue. But there are some disturbing factors. If it is the same man, he has suddenly lost his watch and acquired a striped tie. And after solitarily gazing at the sky in shot 9 he is suddenly in an entirely new position, and in modified dress, in the very next shot. Thus our tendency to want to absorb a non-diegetic element that ultimately cannot be absorbed into the diegesis is an important feature of both this prologue and the film in general. It creates a subtle tension that seems to emanate from within the diegesis without allowing us to point to clear-cut instances of a total rupture with its apparent realism.

Thus the very subtle spatial discrepancy of the man's position in shots 1-4 becomes more apparent in shots 8-12, but only as a tension within a dominant diegetic pattern of alternating syntagma which describe two connected sets of actions: the sharpening and test-cutting in shots 1-5, and the final bisecting (of both moon and eye) in shots 8-12. Both of these actions proceed via the division of what at first appear to be contiguous fragments of space and time in a conventional diegetic manner. But on closer examination (almost imperceptibly in the first and more noticeably in the second) both subvert the very same assumptions about diegetic space and time that they seem to want us to accept.

The Figure: Metaphor or Metonymy

The rupture in the diegesis that occurs in the second half of the prologue is a rhetorical figure. The only apparent motivation for the interruption of the movement of the cloud across the moon is the formal *similarity* between the round shapes of the moon and eye, and the thin shape of the cloud and razor, which 'cut' them. Since the motive is *similarity* of the (shapes of the) referents rather than an association of *contiguity*, this figure is metaphoric rather than metonymic.

Using Christian Metz's four-part division of filmic figuration described above, we can see that this is a metaphor placed in syntagm. It is a metaphor in which similarity of the *referents* – the moon and eye, cloud and razor and their similar movements – is arranged *contiguously* (syntagmatically) in the discourse of the image-chain. A metaphor placed in paradigm on the other hand would also have similarity of the referents, but these referents

30 would not both be present syntagmatically. Instead one element would be substituted for the other. In Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, for example, the final shot of a train going into a tunnel is a metaphoric substitution for copulation.

In order to understand what is special about the *Chien andalou* metaphor, it may be helpful to compare it with a much more typical function of a similar figure in another, more typically diegetic film. To stick to train and sex metaphors, in Josef von Sternberg's *Shanghai Express*, for example, Marlene Dietrich and Clive Brooks's first kiss, which takes place on the train of the same name, is followed by an exterior shot of the train's whistle blowing. These two elements, Kiss A and Whistle B, constitute a diegetic metaphor placed in syntagm in which the second element (the whistle) acts as a comment upon the first, but in which both elements are given in the diegesis. The usual procedure in reading such a metaphor is to construct a connotative system of the referents which can encompass both elements. Differences between the kiss and the whistle are minimised while their similarities (heat, excitement, pressure, etc) emerge in a comment upon the sexual excitement of the Dietrich/Brooks relationship.

In this particular metaphor a contiguous background element, the whistle that is on the same train (here the metaphor has an underlying metonymy in that the figure belongs to the diegetic space of the film) is brought momentarily to the foreground as a comment upon the dominant narrative action. But even when the metaphor is pure and there is little or no underlying metonymy as seems to be the case in our *Chien andalou* example, the more typical procedure is to maintain the hierarchy of the diegesis over the figure. Thus the figure rarely takes on more than momentary importance. This hierarchy is usually maintained in two ways: First, the order of appearance of the two parts of the metaphor-placed-in-syntagm is usually diegetic action first followed by the figural element that seems to comment upon it. The whistle emerges as connotatively significant only after the kiss; the reverse would be less effective. But if this order is reversed, as for example in the relatively 'pure' metaphor in the opening of *Modern Times*, in which a shot of a herd of sheep is followed by a shot of a 'herd' of workers entering a subway, there is a second way of assuring the hierarchy of the diegesis. The figural element, whether present in the diegesis or not, usually belongs to natural, architectural, or some other non-human material which seems a secondary or background element. Here too the hierarchy of diegesis over figure is maintained.

But in our *Chien andalou* metaphor it is precisely this hierarchy that is disturbed. The distinctive feature of this metaphor is that what would commonly constitute the background, or B, element of the metaphor, in this case the moon, is given first. But not only is it given first, its entire function builds upon the viewer's expecta-

tion of the more common metaphoric process – of a metaphor that serves the diegesis – while actually giving a diegesis that serves the metaphor. Everything happens in this metaphor as if the formal resemblance between the moon that is ‘sliced’ by clouds and the woman’s round eye elicits the human action of slicing the eye. In other words, there is a reversal of the usual metaphoric process in which one half of the metaphor-placed-in-syntagm belongs to the action of the diegesis, and the other half belongs either to a part of the decor, or, in the case of a pure metaphor, to some other extraneous element. Instead, the moon and clouds which here belong to the diegesis, are precisely the kind of extraneous or background material that would usually come second and belong to the figure. While the eye and the razor, which here belong to the figure, are the kind of human activity that would usually appear first and belong to the diegesis.

So it is impossible to say that one element of this metaphor comments on another hierarchically more significant element belonging to the narrative. In other words, it is precisely the element that usually appears to be the artificial or consciously constructed part of the figure – the part in which we notice the hand of the artist at work forging connotative meanings – that constitutes the ‘action’ of this sequence. But even though it is impossible to establish a connotative system that motivates the figure, it is clear that on the level of the original denotative signifiers – the round shape of the eye and moon, the thinness of the cloud and razor, and the similar speeds with which both move across their respective round objects – there is a remarkable similarity. It is an entirely formal similarity of the signifiers that forms the sole basis for the comparison of these elements.

But not only does this figure seem to create the diegesis, it also becomes a self-reflecting comment on the very process of making metaphors. When we describe this first part we tend to say that the clouds ‘slice’ or ‘cut’ the moon, which they don’t really do, it is already a figure of speech to say so. This incipient metaphor is then realised, so to speak, by the actual slicing of the eye. What is so radically disturbing in this figure then is not, as many commentators have said, the audacity of comparing one violent and sadistic image to another that is innocuous and natural, but the fact that such a rigorous formal control exercised by the self-conscious operation of the figure dictates the development of the sadistic and violent content.

To summarise the differences between our *Chien andalou* metaphor and the structurally similar metaphor in *Shanghai Express* we find: (1) that in the *Chien* metaphor there is a disturbed hierarchy of background and foreground which creates a situation in which the figure appears to generate the diegesis; and (2) that in the *Chien* figure there is a deviation from the more typical semantic basis for the association of the elements of the metaphor;

- 32 form rather than content dictates the association. Such a figure, though formally modelled on the typical metaphor, actually functions as a deconstruction of the anticipated metaphoric process in which the denotative content refuses to be absorbed into a more general connotative expression.

Thus we can say that, whether metaphors or metonymies, whether in paradigm or syntagm, these kinds of autonomous figures refuse to be read as mere embellishment upon a discourse. They demand to be seen as the very cause of this discourse. The figure, which in its more usual manifestation can be dismissed as superfluous, here becomes essential. In *Un Chien andalou* this means that none of the events related by this prologue can be read as the illusion of past events, but only as configurations arising out of the act of writing, out of the desire expressed by the figure itself. Yet, what is so striking about this particular metaphor is the way the meticulous building of apparently metonymic, contiguous elements culminates in an outrageous and metaphoric act of violence which, unlike most film violence, subverts the very 'realism' of its discourse.

The Hand and the Eye

Here we look briefly at the larger implications of this prologue-metaphor considered as an introduction to the rest of the film. If, as we have seen, this figure does not permit the kind of connotative interpretation that comments on the diegesis, there is another sense in which this figure can be seen as a general symbol of the entire act of filmic creation.¹

It is certainly no accident that the first shot of this prologue is a close-up of a hand sharpening a razor, while the last shot combines the elements of hand, razor, and eye. Even to a viewer unaware of the identity of the man wielding this razor whose gaze we constantly follow, it is clear that his function in this prologue resembles that of the film-maker. This function is double: it consists of vision (*envision*) and cutting, two processes that are repeated several times over in the short twelve shots of this sequence.

Every new element introduced after the first shot is first viewed by the man (Buñuel). We watch him looking – twice at the razor and once at the moon. The second look of outward regard which precedes the sudden appearance of the woman seems to have developed out of this vision. It is a progression to *envision* which

1. In this section, I am only making more explicit what Pascal Bonitzer ('Le Gros orteil,' *Cahiers du cinéma* n 232) and Joël Farges ('Image d'un corps,' *Communications* n 23, May 1975) have already suggested.

the diegetically contradictory elements of the tie and the absence of the watch seem to affirm. The 'cutting' that follows this envision is nothing less than its implementation, an ironic symbol of the hand of the artist at work cutting up the continuous fabric of 'reality' into newly significant combinations. 33

But there is another kind of vision in this prologue; that of the woman. Hers is an eye that sees nothing, an eye that stares straight ahead, passive and unblinking at the approach of the razor. It is an eye that is put there to *be* seen, whose vacant stare, as Joël Farges has noted ('Image d'un corps,' *Communications* n 23, May 1975), connects with our own passive, voyeuristic stare, which through this connection, feels the violence of the razor as a blinding assault on its own vision. But blindness, as every poet knows, is but a *figure* for a different kind of sight. So just as Paul Eluard in his lines from *La vie immédiate* – 'Le doux fer rouge de l'aurore/Rend la vue aux aveugles' – employs the iron that blinds as a figure for sight, so Buñuel and Dali draw their razor across our eye in such a way that, by blinding us to the possibility of seeing *through* the figure, they force us to look at the work of the figure itself.

red letters

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Documentary Theory and Practice

Bill Nichols

The drift of recent theoretical interrogation of cinematic practice has been away from narrative towards experimental film. There is a logic here in recognising a certain congruence of intentionality between some experimental film-makers and contemporary theoreticians, but there is also a risk in that part of this congruence lies in a polemical formalism that confuses concern for the film material with Marxist materialism (see Peter Wollen: " "Ontology" and "Materialism" in Film', *Screen* v 17 n 1, Spring 1976). It may be helpful to recall that the range of non-narrative cinema is far greater than the experimental film which reflects upon its own materiality, that for a materialist (Marxist) film theory this broader range is of at least equal importance and that it is perhaps the documentary part of this range that has been most neglected theoretically in recent years.

This neglect is not accidental. It stems in part from the ideological smokescreen thrown up by documentary apologists, many of them ostensibly leftist. Thus John Grierson admits in an interview with Elizabeth Sussex that the documentary film 'ceased exploring into the poetic use of the documentary approach with us in the 30's' ('Grierson on Documentary,' *Film Quarterly*, v XXVI n 1, Fall 1972, p 24).

This admission seems to stand in a linear relationship to Henry Breित्रose's recent celebration of content in documentaries: 'Craft and style are useful and important, but the excitement exists just as much when one looks at the uncut workprint, or the unstructured archival materials. It is an aesthetic of content that drives the documentarian, and the rule that for the audience a documentary is as good as its content is interesting is difficult to falsify' (*Film Quarterly*, v XXVIII n 4, Summer 1975, p 38). There is no need to belabour the naive acceptance of ideology at work here – it will be obvious to a reader of *Screen* and this brief quotation from a previous article sufficient to evoke the neces-

sary criticism: 'The first thing people do is deny the existence of the screen: it opens like a *window*; it is transparent. This illusion is the very substance of the specific ideology secreted by the cinema' (Jean-Paul Fargier: 'Parenthesis or Indirect Route,' *Screen*, v 12 n 2, Summer 1971, p 137). What can be added is the simple comment that it is odd that so much theoretical attention should go to those areas where illusionism is rendered at least partially suspect by the film itself (narrative, and now experimental film) and so very little to documentary where the challenge of facing this illusionism head-on is greatest. It is only by examining *how* a series of sounds and images signify that we can begin to rescue documentary from the anti-theoretical, ideologically complicit argument that documentary-equals-reality, and that the screen is a window rather than a reflecting surface.

We need, then, to examine the formal structure of documentary film, the codes and units which are involved, in order to re-see documentary, not as a kind of reality frozen in the amber of the photographic image à la Bazin, but as a semiotic system which generates meaning by the succession of choices between differences, the continuous selection of pertinent features. Despite the denunciation of various cinematic 'realisms', this work has scarcely begun with documentary, and yet what better place is there to confront the challenge of realism than here? What follows is an attempt to inaugurate theoretical discussion of the documentary film.

These comments are derived in the main from an exhaustive study of the films made or distributed by Newsreel, a radical film group in the United States. As such they are based on a fairly narrow range of documentary material, and although this has been kept in mind, further elaboration may be necessary before they can stand as adequate generalisations. They are also somewhat empirically grounded at the present moment, and more rigorous efforts may in fact require less elaboration than radical recasting. I hope these developments will be soon in coming.

The Expository Genre

The very notion of documentary is theoretically ill-defined. Christian Metz, for example, excludes documentary from theoretical priority. He writes:

'It is by no means certain that an independent semiotics of the non-narrative genres is possible other than in the form of a series of discontinuous remarks on the points of difference between these films and "ordinary" films. . . . It was precisely to the extent that the cinema confronted the problem of narration that . . . it

Thus, for Metz, documentary (which he treats as a non-narrative genre) could not possibly devise specific signifying procedures of its own. I believe, on the contrary, that there are specific signifying procedures in documentary and that they are not dependent upon documentary's occasional utilisation of narrative techniques (ie they are not sporadic, but systematic).

But the problems are great, beginning with definitions. The imprecise character of standard definitions is well indicated, though inadvertently, by William Sloan in 'The Documentary Films and the Negro,' in Lewis Jacobs, ed: *The Documentary Tradition*, New York, 1971, p 425: 'The term documentary is used in its broadest sense to refer to films that possess truth and project reality, and are intended primarily for non-theatrical use.' Truth as reified possession, reality as something that can be mechanically reproduced upon a screen, and a non-commercial purpose: one lame stab at intentions and two gross epistemological naiveties scarcely constitute an adequate model. Yet Richard Meran Barsam's *Non-Fiction Film*, a book which devotes a whole chapter to definitions, only repeats these concepts at greater length, compounding them with a quantitative absurdity: a documentary's 'typical running time is thirty minutes' (New York 1973, p 4). If nothing more could be said, Metz's contention would be beyond dispute.

A more adequate definition of documentary would seem to require that it be placed as a genre alongside narrative, showing in what ways it merges with and departs from this parameter.¹ For the moment, let me simply suggest that documentary may profitably be so examined as a genre with conventions and audience expectations like those of other genres, and that documentary does not form a simple opposition to the term narrative. Some documentary incorporates narrative concepts into its formal structure (this is perhaps especially clear in the cinéma-vérité work of Leacock and Pennebaker with its 'crisis structure') and some non-narrative film is not documentary (eg flicker films). And some documentaries, although utilising certain codes of narrative, seem to be organised in their formal structure around what might be called the codes of exposition.

A model for the codes of exposition would have to account for the multiplicity of expository forms (essay, speech, documentary) and distinguish those expository codes that are unique to film, or specifically cinematic in Metz's terminology. This is the province of a rhetoric, but the rhetoric we have inherited would seem no more adequate as a model for the textual system of specific docu-

1. I shall use 'narration', 'narrational' and 'narrator' to refer to spoken commentary, and 'narrative' to refer to fiction.

mentaries than critical notions of the theatre and the novel are 37
for the fiction film. The question of mode of address provides a
starting point for developing a more independent model.

Mode of Address

In terms of the formal organisation of the documentary, there are two basic modes of address (ie patterns of sound/image relationship that specify somewhat different 'places' or attitudes for the viewer). These can be called direct and indirect address, according to whether or no the viewer is explicitly acknowledged as the subject to which the film is addressed. These modes can then be subdivided according to whether or no the viewer is addressed by characters (individuals representing their social roles outside the film) or narrators (individuals representing the point of view of the documentary itself, surrogate figures, usually, for the film-maker's own interpretation), and whether or no the narration is synchronised with the images. Diagrammatically:

Direct Address

	<i>sync</i>	<i>non-sync</i>
<i>narrators</i>	Voice of Authority	Voice of God Images of Illustration
<i>characters</i>	Interview	Voice of Witness Images of Illustration

Indirect Address

	<i>sync</i>	<i>non-sync</i>
<i>narrators</i>	—	—
<i>characters</i>	Cinéma-Vérité (Voice and Image of Social Actors)	Voice of Social Actors Images of Illustration

Historically, most documentaries have used the mode of direct address, and it is still preferred by television documentary, political films and most sponsored or commercial films. Indirect address seems to invite risks of incomprehensibility (the lack of a guiding hand) and, for political film-makers, empiricism (a risk well confirmed by much cinéma-vérité).² Conversely, the adoption of direct

2. By cinéma-vérité I mean that kind of film-making represented by the work of Leacock-Pennebaker, Wiseman, the Maysles brothers and others, where the entire film is built around characters in sync and indirect address. Other forms of cinéma-vérité or direct cinema

38 address has run the perennial risk of dogmatism, while offering the advantage of analytical precision.

Indirect address is also the principal mode of narrative and is a prime contributor to the creation of the diegesis, the fictional plane of reality, in so far as it is a mode that is self-enclosed, not rupturing its internal plane of reality by directly addressing the viewer. It is also a mode at the disposal of the documentary filmmaker. When indirect address is used in documentary, however, it very seldom serves to advance a narrative, the temporal development of the diegesis, but rather serves to support an exposition. Extending this point, we might say that the diegesis is no longer a spatio-temporal universe plausibly maintained in its autonomy, but rather a conceptual universe, the domain of the exposition. This, however, removes diegesis from its close association, in Metz's writings for example, with the image track and the projection of an illusionistic universe; it makes diegesis a notion more closely linked with the sound track, with verbal discourse primarily, and the logical universe of its ordering. Such a radical shift in meaning may more properly call for a new word rather than an extension of that of diegesis, which easily lends itself to the erroneous definition of documentary as somehow a projection or capture of reality. Meanwhile, in this article I shall use 'diegesis' in quotation marks to refer to the spatio-temporal continuity in documentary comparable to that in fiction, and diegesis without quotation marks to refer to the plane of logical ordering which supports the exposition.

This distinction can also be examined in relation to narrators and characters. These very terms, however, may seem problematic, especially in that they suggest a distinction between narrative containing characters and exposition excluding them. The narrator, first of all, stands in a direct relation to the exposition, seldom causing any confusion with narrative modes. Whereas the appearance of a narrator speaking in direct address almost invariably ruptures the 'diegesis' of fictional narrative, it can *constitute* the diegesis of documentary exposition. Hence the diegesis cannot be ruptured by the narrator's presence, although it sometimes can be by his absence, by the lack of a logical principle ordering the whole which the narrator usually makes manifest. If narration stands outside the narrative sequence and intrudes upon it or marks it off, narration can found the expository sequence and with it the principles of organising such parts into a whole different in its structure from a narrative whole but no less complete or complex, contrary to Metz's original assertion.

such as Rouch's work. films from the Canadian National Film Board, Allan King, etc, tend to mix modes more freely and represent less clearly a pole or extreme possibility. This does not represent any kind of judgement about the films, it simply seems useful as a descriptive or taxonomic procedure.

Characters, though, stand in an indirect relation to the exposition and are presumed to enjoy a certain autonomy from it (they begin as real people – social actors, not film actors – who then contribute to an exposition, rather than beginning as a function of the exposition subsequently embodied by a real person, the narrator). They thus enjoy an extra-textual autonomy as characters that the narrator does not enjoy *as a narrator*. The establishment of this autonomy within the film, however, may recall the notion of ‘diegesis’ in fiction. Two distinctions should be pointed out. First, that as a spatio-temporal continuum the ‘diegesis’ is intermittent in the documentary of direct address rather than continuous as in fiction. Second, that the ‘diegetic’ plane is located outside the film (it is in fact equated with reality itself in most instances, in Newsreel films at least). The film marks, indexes or refers to this location without ever fully inscribing it. Such a location proposes less the notion of fictional closure than that of open access to the real, a shift which still allows for the intersection of documentary with the illusionistic strategies of fiction.

The Expository Sequence

A similar comparison between exposition and narrative can be made vis-à-vis the question of the sequence. The sequence is part of the problem of an overall theory of part/whole relations within the textual system. In so far as the whole is different in exposition and in narrative, it would seem to follow that the sequence too might need to be differently constructed.

Of course, the sequence has long remained ill-defined in the theory and criticism of the narrative film itself. As Henderson has indicated (‘Two Types of Film Theory,’ *Film Quarterly* v XXIV n 3, Spring 1971, pp 33-42), both Eisenstein and Bazin constructed theories of the sequence as though it were identical to or at least need not be distinguished from the whole film. No clear-cut definition of the sequence can be found in either theorist. Christian Metz, in attempting to specify part/whole relations within the narrative film, does offer in his *grande syntagmatique* a definition of the sequence as a syntagm, or unit of narrative autonomy: a sequence is ‘a coherent syntagm within which the “shots” react (semantically) to each other’ (op cit, p 115). He also links the sequence to the classical rhetorical requirements of *dispositio*, the interrelation of elements whose internal structure is unspecified (like sequences). But for Metz the controlling force of *dispositio* in film is narrative, and his *grande syntagmatique* is a catalogue of sequences constituting a paradigm of narrative choices. The general notion of a coherent syntagm might well be retained, but if the sequence is an element within an expository whole, the narra-

40 tive framework that Metz employs will have to be replaced. Perhaps most significantly the sequences (and any *syntagmatique* of them) should no longer be thought of primarily as categories of the image track, as they are for Metz. This corresponds to the shift in the meaning of diegesis and requires locating the sequence primarily in relation to the verbal sound track. Such a shift, in fact, corresponds to Metz's own evolution; his comment about sequences in *Language and Cinema* (The Hague and Paris 1974, p 201) needs only slight modification, in particular the replacement of 'images' by 'sound/image relationships', to apply to expository sequences as well:

'The distinctive element in such a code (that of the *grande syntagmatique*) is not the sequence itself, . . . but only the logical principle of ordering which animates it and which assures it cohesion, permitting the images to form a sequence instead of remaining isolated views.'

The principles of sequence construction in direct address have been in place since the early days of sound at least. The British documentary of the 1930's, the work of the Film and Photo League in the USA, and the films of Pare Lorentz established a pattern elaborated upon by *Why We Fight* (1943-5), *Every Day Except Christmas* (1957), *The Selling of the Pentagon* (1971), and numerous other 'mainstream' documentaries. Each sequence sets in place a block of argumentation which the image track illustrates, with more or less redundancy (shading from unqualified verification to bitter irony). If there is a counterpart to the 'classical narrative cinema', this form of 'classical expository cinema' would seem the most likely candidate.

A recent innovation in this strategy has been developed by Emile de Antonio, whose films include *Point of Order* (1963), *Rush to Judgement* (1967), *In the Year of the Pig* (1969), *Milhouse: a White Comedy* (1971), *Painters Painting* (1973) and *The Weather Underground* (1975). These still amount to 'classical expositions', but they avoid the traditional locus for the line of the argument, the narrator. Instead, de Antonio marshals his argument through the relationships established by editing between the comments of various characters. The spectator's responsibility for ferreting out and following the line of reasoning is consequently increased, although the continued use of direct address (via characters) militates against a very radical shift from the place of the spectator in classical exposition.

Newsreel's contribution has been less elimination of the narrator than dispersion: more than one narrator, women as narrators, narrators and characters choreographed into a singular line of exposition. *We the Palestinian People*, *We Demand Freedom*, *Teach Our Children*, *In the Event Anyone Disappears*, *Rompiendo Puertas* (*Break and Enter*) – these and other films typify this

tendency with varying degrees of success. As a more prismatic, less assertive or dogmatic means of argumentation, this innovation is one of Newsreel's tactical strengths. It correlates well with their concern to have people speak for themselves, to film rank-and-file individuals rather than more rhetorically accomplished leaders, and can be expected to remain a mode to which Newsreel will give priority.

Principles of sequence construction in indirect address have been less well elaborated, partly because the techniques of *cinéma-vérité* are more recent and partly because the tradition in most countries has been towards a fusion of direct- and indirect-address sequences within a composite whole (eg *Back Breaking Leaf*, *I was a Ninety-pound Weakling*, *Woodstock*, *Dead Birds*, *Mondo Cane*, *Still a Brother*). It has been the American style of *cinéma-vérité* described by Stephen Mamber in *Cinema Vérité in America* (Cambridge, Mass, 1974; cf also *Screen* v 13 nn 2 and 3, Summer and Autumn 1972) that has been the most rigorous in utilising indirect address in an unalloyed fashion, and of its practitioners, Frederick Wiseman has been perhaps the most significant.

Full discussion of his work must be reserved for another occasion, but it seems to represent a radical restructuring of the viewing experience (aligning it, ironically, in this abrupt departure from classical exposition, closer to classical narrative). This restructuring has theoretical consequences in relation to the political use of documentary. Unlike the more ideologically complicit debates about subjectivism, honesty and the camera's effects on social actors ('real people'), this line of consideration enters an ill-examined area that seems somewhat analogous in the general lack of political (Marxist) interest for it to that of the experimental film.

Narrators and Characters in Direct Address

Our present concern, however, is Newsreel's preferred mode, direct address, and, most immediately, a further consideration of the functions of narrators and characters. The narrator in direct address often serves to bridge sequences: to make manifest the logical principle that orders the sequence into larger units, segments, and a textual whole. In general, this function, though, has been neglected by Newsreel in their own film-making, perhaps indicating the lack of a firm grip on the overall strategy ordering a film, or suggesting a misplaced desire to avoid rigidified coherence in favour of a more evocative flow. Some films run the risk of neglecting the narrator's 'coherence function' altogether, although it is also possible that discrete moments of confusion or incoherence may mark symptomatic points that can be analysed in the manner

- 42 suggested by the *Cahiers du Cinéma* study of *Young Mister Lincoln* (Screen v 13 n 3, Autumn 1972).

The narrator can also be localised within a sequence, in which case his or her function is usually restricted to either the statement of or the elaboration on a particular point, and sometimes both. This is the predominant function of the narrators in Newsreel's prison films (*We Demand Freedom, Teach Our Children* and *In the Event Anyone Disappears*), where intertitles also serve to pinpoint specific aspects of the argument. The risk inherent in systematic localisation within sequences is fragmentation, the loss of overall coherence. It is a risk multiplied by the organising principles of Emile de Antonio, where narrators are eliminated in favour of interviews and compilation footage. Great care is required if the logical bridging that a narrator could provide is to arise from other sources. Newsreel seems to be most successful in achieving this bridging in those films organised around characters, discussed below.

When the line of reasoning of the narrator bridges sequences, threading its way through the entire film, it usually promotes the verbal sound track to a position of dominance, organising the remaining tracks (location sound, music, image and graphics) and providing the viewer's point of entry to the expository whole. Hence the criteria of logical argument developed elsewhere (in formal logic and rhetoric) can to a large degree be applied as tests of the narration's coherence. Conversely, the actual form of the argument (like the actual form of narrative in fiction films) may be, in part, specifically cinematic. To what degree this calls for new criteria of assessment must await a more complete elaboration of the specifically cinematic codes of exposition (perhaps especially those involving sound/image relationships: verbal statements followed by visual and musical illustration, verbal statement accompanied by confirmation, contradiction, ironic shading, etc).

However, something more can be said, in two connections:

First, vis-à-vis the relationship between denotative and connotative signification in the verbal sound track. Although the literal signification, the denotation, may be the primary organising component, it may also be subordinate to its own connotative aspects. For example, a monotonous narration explaining the strategy and tactics of a national-liberation struggle may completely undermine the understanding provided by its denotative aspect, however brilliant; on the other hand, this lacklustre quality of the narration serves as a perfect overtone to the factual recitations in *US Techniques and Genocide in Vietnam*³ and *Land Without Bread or Night*

3. Third World Newsreel distributes the film under this name. I believe this is the same film as the one called *Some Evidence* (*Vai Toibac Cua de Quoc My*, 1969) in Erik Barnouw: *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, New York and London 1975, p 274.

and *Fog*. It is not the absolute priority of the connotative codes that is in question but their effect in context. Newsreel's own domestic films, rich in tonal inflections and rhythms of characters in direct address, seem far more exemplary in this regard than the national-liberation films they distribute, where character speech is overshadowed by interpretative narrators.

Second, vis-à-vis the relationship between the verbal sound track and the other sound tracks. Total absence of location sound in sync with the image track tends to make the expository diegesis seem an argument operating on an abstract plane to which images, operating on another abstract plane, are appended, rather than one where the images concretise or specify the argument. This is a pragmatic point, not a claim about the ontological status of sounds and images in the film medium. Given that a film proposes a structure in which such a Bazinian formulation is implicit, the utilisation of location sound seems to be a prerequisite for overall integration of sound and image tracks, an integration which may still leave major ideological problems unexamined. That there is no *inherent* necessity for this integration is perhaps made clear by films of the Dziga-Vertov Group such as *Letter to Jane* in which the narration, by also functioning as a commentary upon itself, locates a specificity at the level of the textual codes rather than in the extra-textual referent, the 'real world' to which the Newsreel films propose a transparent or faithful relation.

Characters in direct address figure prominently in Newsreel's films, as in many other recent documentaries (de Antonio's work being the extreme case). *The Woman's Film*, *38 Families*, *El Pueblo se Levante* (*The People Rising*), *Rompiendo Puertas* (*Break and Enter*), *Gl José*, *Black Power*, *Redevelopment*, *Homefront* and *A Space to be Me* are among the films where the exposition is organised principally or exclusively by characters. Like the dispersion of the narrator, the predominance of direct-address characters seems motivated by Newsreel's desire to document contemporary struggle as it is articulated by the participants themselves.

Organisation of the verbal sound track in relation to sequences can once again be of two kinds: characters can serve a bridging function or their commentary can be localised within the sequence.⁴ The first case needs clarification, since it can easily lead to a con-

4. Sequence-localised commentary by characters in *Attica* supports the call to redefine diegesis in documentary. Sequences are intercut or alternate, but rather than proposing any kind of temporal matching (in fact a temporal disparity is made evident by various cues) as such cross-cutting may do in Metz's *grande syntagmatique*, the editing establishes a continuity of logical argument. The editing relationship between sequences replaces narrational bridging devices, which are lacking, but serves the same purpose.

44 fusion of characters and narrators. Characters cannot themselves serve a bridging function deliberately without foreknowledge of the film's overall structure, in which case they do in fact occupy a status in between those of character and narrator. John Watson's commentary in *Finally Got the News* is an excellent example: Watson participated in the film's planning but also appears as himself, as a worker-organiser; he is not only the embodiment of an argument whose integrity resides strictly within the film, he also extends integrity by reference to his extra-filmic autonomy as a social actor or real person, in the midst of the struggle to which he refers (for additional discussion of this film see Dan Georgakis: 'Finally Got the News,' *Cineaste* v 5, n 4, pp 2-6). Otherwise characters strictly as characters only serve an extra-sequential, bridging function through the manipulation of textual codes. In this case their bridging function for the film is implicit, not part of the original design of their commentary. Bridging via character then becomes a function of the editing process. De Antonio's work is the purest example, but *I was a Ninety-Pound Weakling* offers a lighter, more ironic but equally valid illustration of the same point. *Portrait of Jason*, on the other hand, carries the dominance of characters in direct address to its extreme while also minimising the effects of editing; bridging, here, simply becomes a function of chronological condensation.

However, in most cases characters in direct address function within sequences rather than between them. If a film stresses the development of such sequences with comparatively slight attention to their overall connection, the result need not be a garbled whole. In fact, the latter is most often produced if exposition is directed towards advancing a specific argument or line of reasoning, and suffers in consequence from any weakness of the connective tissue. A less problematic course is to aim the exposition towards elucidation or description rather than argumentation. It is then possible to flatten the overall argument into a simple assertion (eg, the US Army is an agent of imperialist, racist policies) and emphasise a description or elaboration of this assertion at the personal level of testimony by character witnesses, as in *Only the Beginning*, *Winter Soldier*, or *GI José*.

The development of a typology of character-sequences and their possible relationships must await elaboration of the codes of exposition. In its stead, some general observations can be offered. Characters in direct address (classically the interview format) have a wide range of modes available to them, from the description of events or situations that were intensely personal experiences to that of ones seen with calm detachment or perhaps indirectly experienced – the range from witness to authority. They can speak about the effects of events or situations upon themselves or about their own level of awareness, their beliefs at the time of the event or situation. Alternatively, this level can be completely suppressed

or ignored, depending on the particular circumstances. All of these alternatives are combinatory among themselves and their formal combination in the film, along with other choices (eg, does each character develop a different point or do several characters elaborate on the same one?) works to realise the textual system in its distinctiveness.

In general, it can be said that interviews have worked particularly well in Newsreel films when they have been concerned with the beliefs of characters, especially in so far as these have been altered by the experience of an event, process or situation, for example in *Oil Strike* (workers describe changes in their attitudes to the company, the police and the law as a result of their strike), *In the Event Anyone Disappears* (prisoners describe their changing attitudes towards prison on the basis of concrete experiences), *Gl José* (Puerto Rican ex-GIs describe changes in their attitude towards machismo, the military and Vietnam after a tour of duty), as well as parts of *Homefront*, *Childcare*, *The Woman's Film*, *Redevelopment* and *Rompiendo Puertas*. The effectiveness of the strategy depends on the congruence between the character's goal (to describe or explain a change in the values or beliefs that he or she can articulate) and the kind of discourse facilitated by direct address (explicit statements) with characters instead of narrators (an element of personal involvement or witness). But it also correlates with one of Newsreel's larger political goals: to provide a focus on and forum for the changes of consciousness they see as constituting a process of radicalisation. Interviews of this kind therefore often fit well within the structure of a textual system which may be directed thematically towards questions of education, consciousness raising or radicalisation.

Sound/image relationships involving characters in direct address appear to break down into four categories. Most common is sync sound accompanying images of the character. This relationship seems virtually indispensable: to hear and never see a character would be very unusual. Sync sound/image shots or sequences serve to anchor characters within their milieux and to realise (make real) the surface manifestations of their extra-textual identity (dress, physique, gestures, etc). In a film like *Rompiendo Puertas* these sequences are a valuable means of specifying the hazardous physical conditions of the buildings inhabited by the tenants who address us.

Three relationships are possible within the general class of non-sync sound/image combinations:

The first involves images of *illustration*, also referred to as 'cutaways' or 'inserts', that serve to clarify or specify a speaker's point. Sometimes the cutaway is presumed to maintain the space-time continuum established by a sync interview, but whether the 'diegesis' is maintained or not, the structuring principle remains that of illustration. (Unless the shift is made within the shot – by

- 46 panning or zooming away from the speaker as he or she continues to speak – the assumption that spatio-temporal continuity is being maintained seems to depend upon the steady flow of the ‘diegesis’ through the sound track; but if spatial continuity is broken – by a cutaway to another location, say – the ‘diegesis’ does not need careful protection against disintegration as in narrative films, where such breaks are signalled by a change of sequence, point-of-view shots, flash-backs, etc, thereby absorbing potential rupture into a narrative flow. This again suggests that, although the diegesis in documentary may sometimes depend upon the visual depiction of the pro-filmic event, this level operates more intermittently than in narrative, the integrity of the diegesis being guaranteed predominantly by the codes of exposition.)

Counterpoint, or circumscription or contradiction of the verbal sound track is the least common relationship in Newsreel films. Newsreel seldom interview characters with whom they profoundly disagree and whose integrity or logic they wish to subvert. This is one of the principal differences between Newsreel’s use of characters in direct address and that of film-makers who have satiric, ironic or iconoclastic intentions such as Emile de Antonio, Dusan Makavejev, Claude Jutra or Chris Marker.

Extension of a character’s commentary is most often seen in Newsreel’s utilisation of metaphor. The problems of this method are well known, in particular its tendency to deny historical specificity to particular events and situations. *Teach Our Children*’s metaphorical identification of prisoners, slaves and workers in terms of their oppression, for example, establishes one common bond at the expense of distinctions between stages of historical development and the forms of exploitation and oppression peculiar to each stage. In fact, by metaphorically likening prisoners to workers, the film overlooks the distinction between exploitation and oppression altogether. On the other hand, Newsreel’s films on national-liberation struggles do not contain metaphorical relationships that over-ride historical specificity or logical distinctions. Given the narrow and problematic range within which most usage has fallen in Newsreel’s work, the possible uses of metaphor in relation to characters in direct address is difficult to determine from it.

The Viewer’s Place in the Exposition

Having established a variety of parameters of the expository system, especially the various types of narration, and its use by Newsreel, let me end by considering the expository system as a whole, and in particular, part/whole relations in it. An interaction common to expository films generally is the establishment of an

anticipatory relationship by exposition in itself (in a manner akin to but distinct from narrative). Exposition usually appears as a tacit proposal: the invocation of and promise to gratify a desire to know. Thus as it begins it proposes an ending: the film's temporal trace will fulfil the wish to possess the truth. If the succession of sequences and segments, the reflux of the whole on to the parts, meta-communicative or self-reflexive bracketing devices fail to provide what has been promised, the film may collapse into no more than the sum of its parts.

Two aspects of this interaction require elaboration. The desire to know that is invoked is not placed in the kind of continuous filmic referent that the inculcation of desire by narrative is. A 'diegesis', if present, is not significant to the film as a whole. Moreover, in so far as the diegesis, without quotation marks, can be identified with the plane of the exposition, it has no continuous physical marker, unlike the narrative plane, which has the image track (where Metz situates the narrative syntagms constituting the narrative whole). This simply serves to shorten the already slight distance between sign and referent in the narrative cinema: the desire to know expects to be fulfilled in terms of the real conditions of existence, the pro-filmic event apart from the mediation of the system of textual codes. The uncritical adoption and regular deployment of realist techniques only serves to further this slippage between sign and referent, textual system and real conditions, our relation to the expository diegesis and our relation to the real conditions of existence. Thus Newsreel's wish to address the viewer with their analysis of the real conditions, expressed in their reliance on a variety of types of narration, leads in practice to a tendency to ease aside the distinction between the argument (the textual system) and the referent (the real conditions). Hence their weakness at the level of the textual system or formal structure, a weakness common to many political film-makers.

The second significant aspect of this part/whole interaction – the invocation of the desire to know – involves the characteristics of direct address itself, the mode most often used by Newsreel. This mode explicitly invokes the viewer as subject. Its appeal to reason presumes a centre for its own discourse, the locus of He-Who-Knows, which reciprocally calls the viewer into being as a comparable centre or locus, distinguished by the lack of the knowledge which is promised him. Despite differences between the expository system and the classical narrative system, the mode of direct address as used by Newsreel seems to offer a fundamentally similar place to the subject. The verbal soundtrack is used in a manner that preserves, at the level of the desire to know, the place of the subject which is being challenged in much contemporary writing on the cinema and literature. Godard and his collaborators in the films of the Dziga-Vertov Group have explored ways of interrogating this invocation of the viewer as subject within the structure

48 of their films. Other documentaries in indirect address (notably those of Frederick Wiseman) may also possibly work against this placing of the viewer as subject.

It is clear that the manner in which the viewer is addressed, the precise way in which the desire to know is invoked and gratified by the exposition, is a matter of political importance. It is a point of intersection between ideology and text whose parameters and implications need much closer examination, to avoid the risk of overgeneralisation about its tyranny, and to specify precisely at what levels ideological operations are in greatest force and how they might be deflected. The psychical investments we make in our relationship to the film experience – how we are interpellated, what promises or propositions are established by exposition or narrative and how they are fulfilled – constitute a repetition of the psychical investments which are a basic component of our relations to our real conditions of existence. The investment we make in a film is a structural investment, promoted by a textual system grounded in style, and dedicated to propositions whose ideology we must carefully consider.

Achim Eschbach and Wendelin Rader have just finished their *Semiotik-Bibliographie 1* which will be published in September 1977 by Syndikat-Verlag, Frankfurt-am-Main, West Germany. They ask anyone interested to send them lists of their publications, including forthcoming titles, to help them in the preparation of the next volume. Please write to: asa – arbeitsgruppe semiotik aachen, Achim Eschbach/Wendelin Rader, Lousbergstr. 50, 5100 Aachen, West Germany.

Anata mo*

Stephen Heath

'the content goes beyond . . .'

(Karl Marx: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*).

The question which has now become crucial is that of the conditions of production of filmic discourses; debate about 'realism in the cinema' which is not posed in consequence of that question simply falls prey to the tautological blindness of 'reality' and its 'reflection' (often, indeed, the true substance of accounts of 'representation'). Necessarily, such a question affects the very terms of the theoretical discussion of film, engaging a critical perspective not just on those terms derived from a 'classic' semiotics but equally on those which have been used to displace this latter. We are beginning to see, for instance, that the concepts elaborated in the distinction between enounced and enunciation, *énoncé* and *énonciation*, are at once essential and yet at the same time difficult in their dependence on a linguistic reference which can itself quickly provide the point of departure for a new formalism: as it does

* The following piece is a revised version of a paper written for the SEFT/Screen weekend on 'Realism and the cinema' held in October 1976. In that context, it was intended to provide background to (and a certain dialogue with) a paper by Colin MacCabe entitled 'Principles of Realism and Pleasure' and published in *Screen* v17 n3, Autumn 1976. I was specifically asked to do two things: give an account of Lacan's concept of 'the real'; discuss Oshima's *Death by Hanging*. The first of those tasks involves problems of understanding the functioning of what is, by definition, one of the most difficult and, in a way I try to suggest, problematic points of Lacan's work; the difficulty will inevitably be found in many of the quotations I am led to make. The main revision of the paper here consists in two 'notes' added at the end in an attempt to focus certain questions arising for future work – the piece, that is, is no more than a simple contribution to an ongoing debate.

50 when mapped unproblematically onto a distinction between narrative and discourse, or when asserted immediately and finally as a contradiction without consideration of the complex dialectic of the subject it involves – approached by psychoanalysis in its description of the double operation of the originating division of the subject in the symbolic, division of the subject with its cause, and the reduplication of the division in discourse, causation of the subject in a splitting that articulates the movement of desire, loss and its ellipses in images, identifications, fantasies, fictions, ‘reality’ even. In fact, and following on from this, we are beginning to see the importance for the question of the production of filmic discourses of an analysis that focusses the conditions of the *junction* of enounced and enunciation – ideologically, what are the determinations at work in a given opposition of ‘form’ and ‘content’? – and the *address* it realises – ideologically, what is the place, the unity, for which the ‘opposition’ allows, in which it allows the subject? It is in the context of such an analysis that the contradictions in the process of the production of a discourse are to be grasped, including those of its ‘realism’.

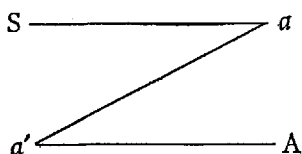
If we are beginning to see this, it is largely in response to certain practices, practices which demonstrate certain areas of difficulty when brought together in our particular situation in the attempt to think through, historico-materialistically, problems of subjectivity, ideology, political action (as in education, in the teaching of image, sound, and meaning). What follows looks very schematically at two critical practices – Lacan’s intervention in psychoanalytic theory, Oshima’s *Death by Hanging* – and, from their encounter, tries to suggest something of those problems and those areas of difficulty with regard to film.

‘For the real does not wait, and notably not for the subject, since it waits on nothing from language. But it is there, identical with its existence, noise in which everything can be heard, and ready to burst over what the “reality principle” there constructs under the name of the external world’ (Jacques Lacan: ‘Réponse au commentaire de Jean Hyppolite’).

The psychoanalytic subject for Lacan is not the subject of the enunciation, is not any *thing*, is defined topologically and not punctually, is the action of a structure. Freud’s description of the *fort/da* game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is luminous in this respect: what it finds as subject is not the baby boy but the circulation of a series of elements (hand, cot, voice, reel, string . . . a whole space), the subject constituted – constituting – across those elements in the process of the repetition.

With the *fort/da* game as a constant reference, Lacan offers an account of the subject for psychoanalysis as held and defined

between three terms: the Other (*l'Autre*), the fiction of the Ego (*le Moi*, 'in the circuit of the transitivity of the Ideal Ego' *E*, 682),¹ and the object small *a* (*l'objet petit a*), or, expressed as the three fundamental instances of Lacanian theory, the symbolic (*le symbolique*), the imaginary (*l'imaginaire*), and the real (*le réel*). Thus held and defined in a structure which is the support of unconscious effects ('the unconscious is a concept forged on the trail of what operates to constitute the subject' *E*, 830), the subject is a fourth term: 'the subject in its reality, as such foreclosed in the system and entering only in the form of the dummy – the dead hand in bridge – in the play of signifiers, but becoming the true subject as this play of signifiers sets to signifying it' (*E*, 551); the subject as process and production, in and out of the play for which the Oedipus (with its three terms or signifiers: father, infant, mother) furnishes a scenario (the 'a' registers a need to understand the historical variation of the cultural forms of the promotion of the function of castration). Lacan provides a 'simplified' schema for this 'structure of the subject' in his paper 'D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose':



'which signifies that the condition of the subject *S* (neurosis or psychosis) depends on what goes on in the Other *A*. What there goes on is articulated like a discourse (the unconscious is the discourse of the Other), that discourse whose syntax Freud sought first to define for those fragments of it which reach us in privileged moments – dreams, parapraxes, strokes of wit.

'How would the subject have an interest in this discourse, if it were not directly involved? It is so, indeed, in that it is pulled to the four corners of the schema, namely: *S*, its ineffable and stupid existence; *a*, its objects; *a'*, its ego, ie what is reflected of its form in its objects; *A*, the locus from which the question of its existence may be posed to it' (*E*, 548-9).

The schema and its explanation can be glossed in turn as follows: the subject is in the real but in the structure, is produced with it in the structure in a relation of absence, the real as outside,

1. The following conventions are adopted for references to writings by Lacan: *E* = *Ecrits*, Paris 1966; *SXI* = *Le Séminaire livre XI*, Paris 1973; *SXX* = *Le Séminaire livre XX*, Paris 1975; *O* = *Ornicar?* (Bulletin périodique du Champ freudien), Paris 1975-; 'SOP' = 'Sur l'objet de la psychanalyse', *Cahiers pour l'analyse* No 3, May-June 1966.

52 structurally foreclosed, excluded *and* effective; *a* is the mark of this effective exclusion in the structure, the real produced in the subjective organisation as object of a lack beneath and beyond demand or need; A is the Other, the Law, the symbolic as 'locus of the signifying cause of the subject' (E, 841), distribution of signifiers in which the subject is taken up in the 'lock' of that double operation mentioned earlier, in which the subject comes into its unconscious desire ('the subject comes to find in the desire of the Other its equivalence to what it is as subject of the unconscious', E, 843); *a'* is the specular image in which the ego seeks reflection as totality, the set of imaginary figures for the object *a* and the resolution of its lack, the very props of subjectivity (in our everyday sense of the word); the axis S – A is the symbolic axis, *a* – *a'* the imaginary axis. It can also be noted that in another version of the schema Lacan writes the points *a*, *a'* and A with the initials of the signifiers in the Oedipal scenario: M(ère), I(nfans), P(ère) (E, 553).

The symbolic and the imaginary have been a constantly present reference in the various attempts to use Lacanian theory in work on film and cinema (the mirror-phase, as moment of both image and difference, has seemed particularly important); the real – as well it might – has been almost entirely absent. 'The real is impossible', declares one of Lacan's most celebrated slogans; let us, then, simply consider some brief passages in which he tries nevertheless to state something of this impossibility and add one or two emphases in the light of their juxtaposition:

'the domain of what remains outside symbolisation' (E, 388)

'in that reality which the subject must compose according to the well-tempered scale of its objects, the real, as cut off from the primordial symbolisation, is *there already*' (E, 389)

'an opening between the appearance, resulting from the symbolic, and the reality as it holds up in concrete human life' (SXX, 87)

'analytic experience teaches us to apprehend the real, in its dialectical incidence, as originally out of place, unwelcome; whereby, precisely, the real for the subject is the most complicit with drive' (SXI, 67)

'the interest taken by the subject in its own division is linked to what determines the latter – namely, a privileged object, arisen from some primitive separation, from some auto-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real, its name in our algebra being object *a*' (SXI, 78).

1. It is evident that real and reality are taken here as distinct. Reality is understood as a construction, the sphere of the representations in which the subject moves in relations of exchange and identity, the sutured coherence sustained along the encounter of

symbolic and imaginary ('suture' for Lacan is the term of a 'juncture of the imaginary and the symbolic', *SXI*, 107); as such, reality serves to contain the real lack, the lack of the real, which is thus always ready to burst over, to splinter the 'reality principle' and its 'external world': the real *is there already*.

2. There already, out of place, unwelcome, the real is the constitutive lack or absence of the structural given, is heterogeneous to the signifier, the domain of what remains outside – of what remains as the outside of – symbolisation. Whence its impossibility, its definition as an experience of resistance ('the real is, in some sort, an experience of resistance', comments a participant in the discussion at the end of one of Lacan's seminars, *SXI*, 84).

3. The real acts in the structure (acts the structure, is its 'cause') as object, index of desire (the 'irreducible residue' beneath and beyond need and the articulation of demand), object small *a*, defined in its 'partialness': '*a*, the object of desire, at the point of departure where our model situates it, is, as soon as it functions there . . . , the object of desire. Which means that, partial object, it is not only a part, or detached spare part, of the apparatus here imagining the body, but an element of the structure from the beginning, and, so to speak, in the deal of the game being played. Insofar as selected among the body's appendices as an index of desire, it is already the exponent of a function which sublimates it even before it exercises it, that of the index finger raised towards an absence of which the *is* it has nothing to say, if not that it is from there where it – *ça*, *id* – speaks' (*E*, 682). The difficulty of the passage just quoted is obvious, it being nevertheless reasonably clear that what is being emphasised is, once again, the real as outside of symbolisation, with the object *a* as the functioning place of the real in the structure of the subject, the loss, absence, limit, distance, death into which the subject is introduced in the symbolic, from the Other: 'It is the very being of man that takes its place among the droppings in which his first frolics have found their wake, inasmuch as the law of the symbolisation that his desire must enter catches him in its net by the position of partial object in which man offers himself in arriving in the world, a world in which the desire of the Other is law' (*E*, 582n); 'The object *a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated as organ. It stands as symbol of the lack, ie of the phallus, not the phallus as such but as it lacks. Thus, necessarily, it must be an object that is, first, separable and, second, having some relation to the lack . . .' (*SXI*, 95). This is to come back to the 'partialness' of the object, which is exceeded by the real that it functions to represent in the structure of the subject: ' . . . the object described by analytic theory: nipple, stool, phallus (imaginary object), urinary stream. (An unthinkable list if one does not add, as I do, phoneme, look, voice – the mere nothing.) For is it not clear that the trait

54 “partial”, rightly stressed in the objects, applies not to their being part of a total object which would be the body, but to their only partially representing the function that produces them? ’ (E, 817).

4. Posed as the limit of the subject’s ‘reality’ (Lacan talks of the ‘field of reality’ as ‘only holding up by the extraction of the object *a* which nevertheless gives it its frame’, E, 554n), the real articulates – determines – that reality in its relations of drive, and is the point of those relations as, fundamentally, the movement of death drives. Lacan expresses this as follows, in a key passage from his essay ‘Position de l’inconscient’ which can stand by itself: ‘Libido is the edge that slides the being of the organism to its true limit, which goes further than the limit of its body. . . . That edge is an organ, from being instrument of the organism. . . . The speaking subject has the privilege of revealing the mortiferous meaning of that organ, and thereby its relation to sexuality. This because the signifier as such, by splitting the subject in first intention, has inserted in it the sense of death (the letter kills, but we learn that from the letter itself). Which is what makes every drive virtually a death drive. What is important is to grasp how the organism is taken up in the dialectic of the subject. From the organism, it is this organ of the incorporeal in the sexed being that the subject comes to place at the time of the operation of its separation. It is through it that the subject can make of its death, really, the object of the desire of the Other. Given which, there will then come into that place the object that the subject loses by nature, excrement, or the supports that it finds for the desire of the Other: its look, its voice. It is in turning these objects to take up in them again, to restore in the subject its original loss, that is engaged that activity which in it we call drive (*Trieb*)’ (E, 848-9).

In his commentary on Lacan’s ‘Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse’, Anthony Wilden writes that ‘the Real is not synonymous with external reality, but rather with what is real for the subject.’² The formulation is attractive in its directness but misleading unless understood with regard to the complexity sketched out above. In the concept of the real, Lacan is aiming at an account of the subject where ‘what is real for the subject’ is an ex-centring or a limit, a radical heterogeneity: outside, the real is impossible, and is ‘real for the subject’ in that impossibility, which the account casts in psychoanalytic terms (death drive, for example). Fantasy (*le fantasme*) is then the product of the impossibility: the imaginary scenario (the axis *a-a’*) in which the subject is figured in a relation to the ‘wanting’ object (Lacan has indicated a wish to have *manque* translated as ‘want’

2. A Wilden: *The Language of the Self* (Delta paperback edition), New York 1975, p 161.

and not 'lack' – the desire in the lack of the object). Hence the formula for fantasy: $\$ \diamond a$ – the split subject (the subject split in the fact of the symbolic, the movement of conscious-unconscious), the object a , and the screen of the juncture of symbolic and imaginary on which the subject is projected (E, 774).

Perhaps the easiest way to summarise the account of the real given here – and, in so doing, to grasp the articulation of real, symbolic, and imaginary – is to take up a question posed by Lacan in a recent seminar: 'is the symbolic gap, the real ex-sistence, the imaginary consistence?' (O n 4, p 104). The drama of the subject in language is the lack or want the latter opens in being, the *manque-à-être*: the imaginary is then the consistence of the subject images set up to fill the lack; the symbolic is made of gaps, divides, and effects – 'causes' – the subject in that division; the real ex-sists (*exist* derives from the Latin *exsistere* which is itself based on a verb *sistere*, 'to be placed'), remains over for the subject, out of its place, an absolute limit (theorised in the death drives). Thus Lacan can answer his question as follows: 'As for what I call ex-sistence, I support it from the real; in the sense that by "sisting" outside the imaginary and the symbolic, it bumps, is at work especially in something that is of the order of limitation – the other two resisting it. Which is to say that the real only ex-sists in the encounter with the stopping of the symbolic and the imaginary' (O n 7, p 5).

Certain of the passages cited previously have referred to the look as object a and it is this reference that Lacan develops in detail in the seminar published as *Le Séminaire livre XI*: 'the look only presents itself to us in the form of a strange contingency, symbolic of what we find on the horizon and as the halting-point of our experience, namely the anguish of castration as constitutive lack' (SXI, 69-70); in this context, moreover, the look is taken by Lacan as having a special status insofar as the area of the visible, the scopic field, is 'where the object a is most evanescent in its function of symbolising the central lack of desire . . .' (SXI, 96).

In fact, then, the look is the object of fantasy in the scopic field: 'in the scopic relation, the fantasy on which the subject is hung in an essential vacillation depends on an object that is the look' (SXI, 78-9). This can be put another way: the look, for Lacan, is what institutes the subject in the visible: 'what determines me fundamentally in the visible is the look, which is outside' (SXI, 98). The look is outside because 'I am looked at, that is, I am a picture' (SXI, 98); the subject sees and is seen and is instituted in that dialectic, the dialectic of eye and look which can know no coincidence and which provides Lacan with all the paradoxes he exploits – 'you never look at me from where I see you' and 'what I look at is never what I want to see', since 'a subject always presents itself as other than it is, and what it is given to see is

56 never what it wants to see' (SXI, 95-6). The image of the screen is explicit here: the subject makes a picture or, better, is a blot in the picture, in the scene ('if I am something in the picture, it is in the form of the screen which I called the blot', SXI, 90), reflecting the look it can never seize in a (re-)unity. But what Lacan stresses is exactly that special status of the look, its evanescent quality as symbol of lack, as 'object *a* reduced, by its nature, to a punctiform, evanescent function – leaving the subject in ignorance of what lies beyond appearance' (SXI, 73): 'As soon as the subject tries to accommodate itself to this look, the latter becomes that punctiform object, that vanishing point of being with which the subject confuses its own failing. Thus, of all the objects through which the subject can recognise its dependency in the register of desire, the look specifies itself as that which cannot be grasped. It is for this reason that, more than any other object, it is unrecognised, and also, perhaps that the subject is able so felicitously to symbolise its own vanishing and punctiform trait in the illusion of consciousness *seeing itself seeing itself* – where the look is elided' (SXI, 79).

The argument runs back to the whole privilege accorded vision in the description of the mirror-phase (itself massively privileged in Lacanian theory); the mirror-phase with its specular image, its moment of difference, its margin of the look:

'What is manipulated in the triumph of the assumption of the image of the body in the mirror is the most elusive of objects in that it appears only marginally: the exchange of looks, manifest in the infant turning towards the person helping it in some way, even if by merely being present at its game' (E, 70).

Probably it is not by chance that Lacan immediately goes on to remember the evidence of a film ('Let us add that one day a film . . .'); certainly it will not surprise us if Bazin is absolutely fascinated by a shot of Yvonne de Bray in Cocteau's *Les Enfants terribles*, by the projection of a 'seeing itself seeing itself': 'The object of the shot is not what she is looking at, not even her look; it is: looking at her looking.'³

'I hope that people will talk above all of the *content* of *Death by Hanging*' (Oshima Nagisa, Interview).

Death by Hanging is a political film, its concern is with the politics of 'reality'. Thus, an initial shift: it aims precisely at reality as 'reality', it is directly about representation, identity, subject;

3. A. Bazin: *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* II, Paris 1959, p 87.

hence its theatricality. To say that is not at all to say that the film is 'anti-representational', formalistically 'deconstructive', 'code-breaking', or whatever; simply, it comes back to the reality by ways other than those that reality proposes, in which that reality is proposed. In so doing, the film poses other questions, something else, political and obliquely political – 'obliquely' from the perspective of the reality and the definitions of the 'political' on its terrain. *Death by Hanging*, as it were, knows that realism is 'the function of a certain form of social structure',⁴ knows the relations of the subject in particular ideological formations as an identification that seeks to avoid historical analysis of the objective process determining subjective modes, and knows differently, endeavours to insert subjectivity as other, elsewhere, difference, coming close – at points – to psychoanalysis.

A news story (as so often in Oshima's work – see, for example, *Boy or In the Realm of the Senses*), dating from 1958: 'The character of R, the hero of the film, was inspired by the real story of a Korean, Rikiu, known of by many people in Japan, since his story created a big stir.'⁵ Two political analyses, opposing analyses which complement one another: that of the State, the crime is exactly a news story, the crime of an individual which – and who – is to be punished as such, according to the law (an analysis, therefore, that politically refuses the political which then returns – as, for instance, in the very 'individual' histories of these State functionaries); that of the Japanese left, the crime is directly and exclusively political, an act of reprisal and struggle committed by a Korean against the Japanese State. The two analyses are both clearly inscribed in these terms in the film, which equally clearly gives their confrontation (as a political film) and is also elsewhere in its work (as obliquely political, oblique to 'the political').

R does not fail to die: 'The prisoner's body refuses execution'. The premises of the action of the film is that disturbance of the habitual (of the 'realistic') on which Brecht insists in his accounts of a theatre of distancing. From then on, there is an action to be exploited, not quite in true with – in the 'truth' of – its image, producing complexes of representation, distances to be crossed. The disturbance and its action: R refuses execution, passage between two films; the abolition-of-the-death-penalty document with its written introduction ('Are you for or against . . .?') and its voice over ('everything is quite ordinary') is interrupted, another film is decided, the voice over returning only at the end, the voice of Oshima, no longer in the film (no longer 'over' nor even pictured in written characters) but in the auditorium – 'and you too . . . and you too . . . *anata mo . . . anata mo . . .*'; a question with no simple object: where are *you* in this film and

4. S M Eisenstein: *Film Form*, London 1951, p 35.

5. Oshima, Interview, *Positif* no 111, December 1969, p 52.

This other film decided, this disjunction of address, renders void the terms of a 'realism': impossible, for instance, in the context of the work of the film to wonder whether the sister is 'real' or 'imaginary', if R and the Prison Officials 'really' leave the execution chamber, and so on (there is no join for you in the film as the position of the operation of such distinctions). The involvement in the work of the film is in an activity of distanciation in the precise sense of the representation – the very images – being given at every moment in contradiction, as the contradictory effect of a social process.

R refuses execution: a problem of representation, precisely. The scenario suspended, the whole course of its order must be gone over again, its system of identities recovered. Hence the action which turns on the theatre of memory ('I'll do my best to restore his memory', proclaims the Education Officer), the continuous fiction, the 'life', the 'consciousness' that R must come back to under the eye of the State (the Public Prosecutor silent behind the glass screen); an action in stages which the intertitles announce and declare; an acting out which moves through that spiralling progression – the court verdict read again ('R, worker . . .'), the Officials' initial miming, the staging with the walls papered, R with his different instants (the 'children' and the train journey, the tapeworm), the time outside ending with the rape, when the violence erupts from the side of the law and after which, inside again, the sister appears immediately in the very body of the crime (the woman in the coffin). It is hardly necessary to stress the extreme clarity of the demonstration here, the distance constantly inserted into the representations ('R, look carefully, that man in white is you'), its constant exhibition of the official place, of its representatives.

The action is done as a narrative, as in a classical narrative film, but that narrative is emptied in the very time it is developed: it resolves nothing, it dissolves. The circle of the line of narrative (from beginning to end, narrative finality) no longer loops rounds on a held consciousness, the hero as figure of its and the film's coherence and the spectator as the position of that coherence, placed in the fiction of the subject. It is here that the work on address engaged by the film is to be grasped. The forms of the production of a system of representation effectively, and essentially, include the places to be occupied as the point of that production, the terms of its completion. If the traditional opposition is maintained, then the activity of narrative in film, as such a form of production, lies in the joins it operates over forms and content, finally running across such an opposition, making form and content, running across that opposition with its chains, binds, implications, its whole economy of address. The place of the economy,

its *for-figure*, is exactly the subject as the achieved coherence of film and spectator: following the film, the spectator makes the relations the film relates in a movement of reciprocal intelligibility (the recovery of meaning), within which movement he or she is entertained as subject – countenanced and occupied, kept going, held in (the etymological sense of ‘entertainment’).

The work of *Death by Hanging* is to interrupt this subject economy, the given opposition of form and content, the received joins: set in motion round R a series of representations which are always also at once transformed into political questions, and find the spectator in the hollow of the series, in the contradiction of representation and question (no longer, simply, in place). The final ‘anata mo’ takes force here, a force which is worked at throughout the film, the images constantly displaced, pushing away, multiplying levels of discourse, breaking any unity of discursive position (for an easy example, think of the different kinds of fixed image and their intersection – the four document-views that accompany the sister’s ‘but you were so poor, and you were Korean’, the stills from earlier in the film with images from elsewhere for R’s ‘I began living in dreams long ago’, the portraits of the sister-Koyama Akiko). What is in fact being posed is the politics of narrative space, the political space of narrative film; *Death by Hanging* represents a commitment to narrative film, and within that commitment a demonstration at once of its limitations and of the specific – other – problems it can nevertheless raise, insert, produce, problems of the subject and meaning and image, of you.

The political space of narrative film: Oshima’s films attempt to articulate a new content (in Marx’s sense of a content that ‘goes beyond’, goes beyond the ideological definition of ‘form’ and ‘content’ and their opposition-unity), to explore in film and cinema the political relations of the subject and the subjective relations of the political in a double and simultaneous movement. This exploration has an evident expression in *Death by Hanging* in the play between R and the sister, where, alongside her analysis, R holds a discourse of extreme subjectivity cast in terms of fantasy and the imaginary (close to our understanding of ‘the power of the imagination’), and with echoes of existentialism. R’s discourse is near to Oshima’s own formulations in a variety of interviews and written texts but the work of the film is not contained in that expression, which it shows indeed in its impossibility, the radical contradiction of the ‘alongside’ operative at every moment and at every level of the film as its very ‘action’. Desire – subject, image, meaning – can only be posed in struggle (the sister’s truth) and that struggle is also subjective heterogeneity, excess, division (R is and is not R), is also a struggle on subject, image, meaning. Involved with memory, *Death by Hanging* has no memory (classically,

- 60 narrative film is a memory-spectacle) other than the effects of that contradiction, falls outside of fiction or realism (they are one and the same), of the sure place – *anata mo*?

In these terms, *Death by Hanging* offers a question for us to Lacanian theory and practice: by dint of declaring the real impossible, on the basis of its description of the structure of the subject, does not psychoanalysis run the risk of making it, finally, itself a sure place? the sure place of psychoanalysis? In its developments, psychoanalysis has often been blind on two counts: historical materialism, art. *Death by Hanging* is situated across those two provinces, the areas of its working contradiction, its process: there is no political problem which is not also a problem of the subject, but equally there is no problem of the subject which is not also, crucially, the political problem of the objective and concrete reality of the social relations of production. It is in that dual emphasis that the reality of the real for the subject is to be grasped, which again – *Death by Hanging* is exemplary (not least in its difficulties) – is a critical problem of representation, a possible area of political and ideological intervention for the making of films, as for the teaching of film.

Notes

I The concluding paragraph of the paper slides too quickly over the problem to which it tries to point via the Oshima film.

From the start, as its very point of departure, psychoanalysis poses something which escapes the discourse of the human subject (Freud talks immediately of 'things', residues in excess of judgement; Lacan of drives as the echo in the body of the fact of there being discourse); psychoanalysis is the theory of that 'something', attentive to the movement of a subject displaced and worked through by language in its relations with the structure of the unconscious. Lacan is emphatic on the weight to be given language 'as cause of the subject' (E, 830): 'Its cause is the signifier, without which there would be no subject in the real. This subject is what the signifier represents, and it could only represent something for another signifier: to which the subject who listens is then reduced' (E, 835) – in short, the subject is an 'effect of language' (ibid). Lacan is equally emphatic, moreover, that this is a materialist theory of language: 'Only my theory of language as structure of the unconscious can be said to be implied by Marxism . . .' ('SOP' p 10). Yet it is evident that historical

materialism can be made to formulate a straight opposition to such an emphasis: it is not language which causes men and women; it is the social practice of men and women which determines in them the form and the content of discourse.

One or two points can be made at once with regard to a confrontation set up in these – rather crude – terms. The psychoanalytic theory of the subject is not a theory of ‘men and women’: the specific theoretical area it gives itself is that of the subject construction of men and women, their structuring as subjects. In this connection, the idea of social practice as determining the form and the content of discourse in men and women avoids the question of the status of language in that structuring, a question which brings with it difficulties for a simply deterministic base-structure/super-structure model (cf the Marr/Stalin debate). Marx writes in *The German Ideology* that ‘language is as old as consciousness’: what psychoanalysis tries to specify is the effect of consciousness given in language and the construction of the subject on which that effect hinges, the articulations of the subject-structure of the individual. This is the context of its thesis of ‘language as cause’, ‘the primacy of the signifier’.

These points, however, do not remove the real problems. At every moment, Lacan produces terms of ground and determination: the division-effect of the subject in the symbolic is a primary alienation, ‘the first operation, alienation, is the fact of the subject’ (E, 840); the real of the analytic experience is the ‘anguish of castration as constitutive lack’ (SXI, 70) and ‘the field of reality . . . only holds up from the extraction of the object *a* which nevertheless gives it its frame’ (E, 554n); desire is always lost on the other side of demand and finds itself in a repetition that poses the limit of death as the abolition of difference, the ‘absolutely its own possibility . . . of the subject defined by its historicity . . . a limit that represents the past in its real form . . . the past which manifests itself overturned in repetition’ (E, 318). But then, exactly, the question remains open as to the social and historical articulation and determination of the determining subject-structure psychoanalysis thus describes (a formulation of the question itself intended to show the difficulty); as to, importantly for us, the relations of the psychoanalytic subject in ideology. For historical materialism (and the attempt to develop an understanding of ideology in historical materialist terms) it must always be finally inadequate, for example, to define psychoanalysis as the theoretical discipline that describes the functions of the unconscious in abstraction from the social processes which support them, or to limit ideology to the sphere of the ego and the imaginary, with the subject and the symbolic held in some way ‘underneath’ (making ideology the support of the unconscious or vice versa).

Psychoanalysis must be established and exploited within historical materialism. There is no subject outside of a social forma-

62 tion, outside of social processes which include and define positions of meaning, which specify ideological places. Yet this inclusion, definition and specification does not exhaust the subject: at once because it says nothing concerning practice and also because it says nothing about the material history of the construction of the individual for such inclusion, definition and specification. It is this latter area that psychoanalysis effectively identifies and opens up (the new 'continent'), that it takes as its province. Yet, to turn back round again, the real history with which psychoanalysis thus deals is still directly and immediately social, not 'before' or 'underneath' or 'elsewhere' to social processes, ideological places. There is a material history of the construction of the individual as subject and that history is also the social construction of the subject; it is not, in other words, that there is first of all the construction of a subject for social/ideological formations and then the placing of that constructed subject-support in those formations, it is that the two processes are one, in a kind of necessary simultaneity – like the recto and verso of a piece of paper. It is to the implications of such a simultaneity that psychoanalysis has often found it difficult to respond.

All that we are able at present to say from here (referring to work in progress) is that the concept of suture developed in psychoanalysis in connection at once with the relation of subject and symbolic and with that of the symbolic and the imaginary as 'pseudo-identification' may offer one way of advancing an effective understanding in these terms – and effective for the discussion of ideological machines such as the cinema and their specific relations of the subject.

II The account of Lacan's reference to the look in connection with the concept of the real can help to clarify one or two uncertainties in the paper by Colin MacCabe (use will also be made here of Paul Willemsen's article on 'Voyeurism, the look, and Dwoskin', *Afterimage* 6, Summer 1976).

Cinema turns on a series of looks: (1) camera – profilmic event; (2) viewer – film; (3) intradiegetic. The series may be read as a sequence in both directions, from 1 to 3 and from 3 to 1 (the camera looks, the viewer looks at what the camera looked at and sees human figures looking in the film; the viewer sees the human figures in the film looking, which is to look at – or, better perhaps, to look on – the film, which is to find the camera's looking, its 'having looked', the mode of presence in absence), with 1 and 2 in a perpetual interchange of 'priority' (the camera's look is only found by looking on the film but the former is the condition of the latter). In fact, what is at stake is a continuing pattern of multiply relaying identifications (a term that would, of course, need to be examined in each case) which can be set out as follows for a narrative film:

Look

1 camera – human
figure ('character')

2 as the reduplication
of 1 (= 'the
spectator's identification
with the
camera')

I

2 viewer – film ('moving
photographic
image')

- i. Positioning-
placing re
photographic
image and its
movement
- ii. Relation to
human figure
- iii. Positioning-
placing on
ground of
narrative and
its movement
of images as
meanings

II

III

- i. point-of-view
overlay of I (= 'identification
with the
character's point
of view')
- ii. possibility of
'subjective shot'
ie i + subject
marking of the
image (= 'identification
as the
character')

3 human figure
('character') –
human figure
('character')

64 [For treatment of the various problems in the different areas of identification and positioning-placing, and in their relations, see: I Metz: 'The imaginary signifier', *Screen* v 16 n 2; Heath: 'Narrative space', *Screen* v 17 n 3; II i 'Narrative space'; II ii Heath: 'Film and system II', *Screen* v 16 n 2, pp 101-107; 'The imaginary signifier'; Mulvey: 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen* v 16 n 3; Willemsen: 'Voyeurism, the look, and Dwoskin', *Afterimage* 6; II iii 'Film and System II', 'Narrative space'; III i & ii Branigan: 'Formal permutations of the point-of-view shot', *Screen* v 16 n 3; 'Narrative space'.]

This pattern is extremely effective: creating movement and play, and yet always returning to a constant hold on the spectator in that very movement and play. Such a creation-return can probably be given an adequate description in terms of the symbolic and the imaginary (let me stress that the present note, like its predecessor, is no more than a tentative focussing of questions): it establishes (a) an imaginary relation with the object wanting, produces figures of the accomplishment of desire in the narrative as memory-spectacle, the representation of unity and the unity of representation; (b) a symbolic production of the object as lost, past in the ceaseless gap of the present, in the circulation-flow of the film, 'death at work' ('la mort au travail' – Straub, borrowing a phrase from Cocteau); (a) is the negation of the subject of the enunciation in the symbolic; (b) is at the loss of the subject of the enounced, retraced in the tensions of desire.

As posed by Lacan, the real can be nowhere in the pattern but its outside, is only to be grasped as what breaks the series of looks, as what *falls* from film and screen. Hence the notion of a fourth look, defined by Willemsen as 'the look at the viewer', the abrupt displacement of the unity and of its movement on the spectator.

It is this that is at issue in Colin MacCabe's paper and that perhaps involves his argument in the one or two uncertainties mentioned above. In the course of his paper, 'the real' is used four times: (i) fairly loosely to refer to 'the relation between text and reader' (p 24); (ii) with regard to interruption of the occultation of the relation between viewer and text, which 'begins engagement with the real – until then there is simply the endless repetition of the imaginary' (p 27); (iii) in connection with interruption via a look, the Milner-Carol squirt-deflation attack in *American Graffiti* when 'the diegetic space is broken up as the film looks back at us . . . this encounter with the real, this movement into the symbolic . . .' (p 20); (iv) with reference to *Death by Hanging*, 'an excellent example of a film in which the indissociability of "the real" from reality is demonstrated, in which the learning of our position in the cinema is also the learning of the social reality of Japan'

(p 25). There are some objections that might be made to the formulations themselves: thus it is not clear, for example, in what sense encounter with the real is equivalent to movement into the symbolic or in what terms the indissociability of the real from reality is being articulated (for Lacan, reality holds up from the real but that real is the absolute dissociation of reality for the subject). These objections are unimportant, however, as compared with the problem posed, most clearly in iii and iv.

The look in iii is evidently the fourth look. Much needs to be done here but it is worth asking whether that look can in any way be conceived as given in the film, as represented. The best instance I have been able to find in the films discussed by MacCabe is that of the split-subject jumps in *Death by Hanging* during the exterior re-enactment-of-the-crime sequence:



1



2



3



4



5

The cuts on the line of R's gaze in Stills 1 and 3 find R himself on the end of that line in Stills 2 and 4 respectively, the latter also disturbing spatial coherence by a kind of misplaced and different return to the initial side of the 180-degree line from which R looks

- 66 back over his shoulder in Still 1 (compare Still 4 with Still 5 which comes from a shot before Still 1). The crux is not the film in itself looking at the viewer but what drops between shots, that interruption and its negativity.

Which brings us to iv. In fact, the fourth look as real is only in the breaking of the film – the breaking, that is, of the pattern of looks, the relay of identifications, the coherence of film, cinematic institution and spectator. But the real is then of the order of that area specified in its difficulty in the preceding note. Analysis would have to begin from there.

For Oshima, and to finish a little differently with the problem, a story where the real in these terms is on the outside of all the elements breaking together. The night of February 25/26, 1936 Tokyo is under a layer of snow. A reception takes place at the American Embassy in honour of Viscount Saito Makoto, recently Prime Minister and now something like Lord Privy Seal. As a treat, Ambassador Joseph C Grew has had a copy of *Naughty Marietta* – the Van Dyke musical starring Nelson Eddy and Jeannette MacDonald – brought over from Hollywood. Will Saito like it? He stays, delighted, to the end of his first sound film, *In the Realm of the Senses*, released this year (in one or two countries), opens in snow-covered Tokyo, tells the story of Sada, a story from 1936; Oshima's voice over at the close, Sada wandering for four days in Tokyo with her lover's severed genitals in her hand; shots of children in the film, children with the Japanese flag, soldiers marching, more children, more flags – in February 1967 Japan decides to reinstate the national celebration day lapsed since the war; in November 1969, Nixon agrees with Sato the return of Okinawa. Saito is assassinated the day after *Naughty Marietta*, in an abortive putsch, part of the history of the growth of Japanese militarism in the 1930's. X in *Sight and Sound* finds that *In the Realm of the Senses* shows how boring sex is on the screen. . . . The real in cinema is somewhere in all that, and between you and the screen – question of the real: *anata mo* . . .?

Erratum

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Breaking with Old Ideas: Recent Chinese Films*

Rosalind Delmar and Mark Nash

'The night was long and dawn came slow to the Crimson Land.
For a century demons and monsters whirled in a wild dance,
And the five hundred million people were disunited.'

Mao Zedong

I The Cinema in China

Before the Japanese invasion the Chinese film industry was small and dominated by American capital and ideology. The invasion curtailed projected expansion. National Chinese cinema properly speaking began in the Communist base area of Yan'an (Yenan), established after the Long March, with the production of documentaries by revolutionary film-makers.¹ Joris Ivens says that he gave the Chinese revolutionaries their first camera and 2,000 m of film in 1938, after the completion of *400 Million*, and that this camera was, 'for the revolutionaries, the beginning of the Chinese cinema' (*Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 236-7, March-April 1972). With liberation in 1949, the new government took over an under-developed urban industry, a projection and distribution system of 600 theatres in the whole country, and a negligible number of

* In this article, Chinese words and names have, as far as possible, been transliterated according to the *pinyin* Romanisation system, with the exception of Peking (*pinyin* Beijing), which has been left in the more familiar form. In a few cases where the *pinyin* form could not be established, names have been left in the Romanisation in which they were found, and these names have been marked by an asterisk. At the first appearance of well-known names which are very different in *pinyin*, the more familiar Romanisation is given in brackets. We should like to thank N-K Leung for his help in this matter.

1. For a different view, see Jay Leyda: *Dianying: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, Cambridge, Mass 1972, esp chs 1-5.

68 mobile projection units for the countryside. All film material and equipment had to be imported. By 1960 there were 15,000 projection teams, and the home industry produced everything for its own needs with the important exception of film-stock. This gap was filled, despite the withdrawal of Soviet aid, and in 1965 the first colour stock was manufactured. In 1976 there are 40,000 projection teams and half of total film production is in colour. During the Cultural Revolution a new gauge of film-stock, 8.75 mm, and new projection equipment, suited to the purpose of carrying film to mountainous regions, was developed. This new, lighter equipment facilitated the growth of the projection units, and meant that films held to be ideologically important could be seen and discussed by all. In national-minority areas the projectionists also have the task of providing a running commentary in the local language.

The initial transformation of the production infrastructure, of which these figures are an index, was carried out using the experience of the Soviet Union, which acted as China's main helper and adviser in the early years. The Russian cinema pioneered the work of mobile projection units, for example. However, the adaptation of Russian styles of work also encouraged, according to some Chinese film-makers, the setting up of many separate departments, hierarchical organisation and a system of material incentives and royalties (if a film was sold abroad, the workers who had made it got an extra bonus). It also quickly helped to make film a centre of debate and political activity. A worker in the documentary studio in Peking, for example, recalled to Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan (see *Cahiers du Cinéma* nos 236-7, *op cit*) how the one-time mayor of Peking, Peng Zhen, managed to get them to make a film valorising the achievements of the municipality of Peking rather than those of Dazhai, the exemplary commune whose experience of self-reliance came to prominence in the critique of Liu Shaoqi (Liu Shao-chi). It is evident that even before the Cultural Revolution the possibilities of film as a nationally diffused bearer of ideology were noticed and seized upon by many politicians.

During the Cultural Revolution the organisation of the studios was transformed, and a sustained attempt was made to break down the hierarchy of privilege: an editor had to become able and prepared not just to carry film-cans, which he had refused to do before, but also to make the tea or sweep the floor. Film production was still organised on a studio system, but with a much more limited bureaucracy, with individual films made by self-constituted autonomous collective work groups. Tasks were still divided, but a more equal relation between the workers was argued to be more fruitful, politically and productively, in the long run. The director remained the central organising and leading figure, but with an obligation to be politically responsible to the group and to see that all ideas of group members were taken into consideration. A new emphasis was also put on 'learning from the masses', in line with

one of the central questions of Marxism: 'Who educates whom?'. Film-makers were encouraged to go collectively to the site of the work which they were transforming into the film medium, to remain there for a time and to utilise the experience of common work and interchange in the process of cinematic production. For example, in making *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a fiction film based on the Jiangxi Communist Labour University, the film crew and actors all visited and worked in the University, and when *Red Detachment of Women* was being reworked, the ballet-dancers and scriptwriters were encouraged to visit Hainan Island and meet the members of the original Women's Red Detachment on whose experience the ballet was based.

II Art and the Cultural Revolution

A recent season of seven Chinese films at the National Film Theatre in London provided an opportunity to see and reflect on some of the products of this new style of work. Of the seven, only the opera-ballet films *Red Detachment of Women* and *The White-Haired Girl* had been shown before in this country.

Before proceeding to a more detailed discussion of the films, it seems necessary to provide some background to the ideological struggle of which they form a part and some reference to features of the Chinese film aesthetic. The Peking Opera provides a convenient starting point in both respects, for two reasons. In the first place, the struggle over the Peking Opera was one of the most hard-fought and best-publicised battles of the Cultural Revolution. Secondly, some of the elements of the Peking Opera are apparent within the system of representation of fiction films.

As an art form Peking Opera is about two hundred years old. Although it is called Peking Opera it is not confined to Peking, and there are about two hundred local forms; although it is called Opera there are no composers as such and the form is a combination of singing, recitative, mime and acrobatics. Some of its specific aspects are: (a) scarcity of props, which are symbolic rather than naturalistic; (b) falsetto singing; (c) symbolism of gesture, which is meant to express intensity and concentration of feeling, the precise shade of political emotion; (d) the *liang xiang*, a still pose performed at the entrance or before the exit of the principals, which resumes the meaning of the scene or preceding action; (e) face-painting, which is used to reveal the symbolic place of the character; (f) stylised costumes.

Already in Yan'an the question of how to revolutionise Peking Opera in order to make it 'serve . . . the millions and tens of millions of working people' (Lenin, in *Party Organisation and Party Literature*, *Collected Works* Vol 10) was an immediate practical

70 concern. A Yan'an Peking Opera Group was set up and produced a new opera *Driven to Join the Liangshan Mountain Rebels* which was based on the fourteenth-century novel *Heroes of the Marshes*. It was after seeing this opera that Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), already the acknowledged leader of the liberation struggle, wrote: 'History is made by the people, yet the old opera . . . presents the people as though they were dirt and the stage is dominated by lords and ladies and their pampered sons and daughters. Now you have reversed this reversal of history and restored historical truth and thus a new life is opening up for the new opera.' The problem was, how to continue to make this 'reversal of the reversal' into a common practice.

Throughout the Cultural Revolution, reference direct and indirect was made to the 'Yan'an spirit' (of the films under discussion *Breaking with Old Ideas* contains the most direct appeal to Yan'an) and this quotation from Mao Zedong was much used in debate. At the 1964 Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes, Jiang Qing (Chiang Ching), Mao's wife, declared: 'Our operatic stage is occupied by emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars and beauties, and, on top of these, ghosts and monsters. . . . Theatres are places in which to educate the people, but at present the stage is dominated by . . . feudal and bourgeois stuff' (*On the Revolution in Peking Opera*, Peking 1968), and this was surely a conscious re-echoing of one of the points Mao Zedong had made in Yan'an as well as being a pointer to some of the directions the Cultural Revolution would take.

Jiang Qing had been herself an actress and film star of the 1930's, imprisoned for Communist activities. In 1940 she went to Yan'an, and in 1949, at the time of Liberation, was in charge of the cinema section of the propaganda bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee. After Liberation she continued to be engaged in cultural work in film and theatre and in 1964 became one of the main standard bearers of the Cultural Revolution. Although in China art and culture had never been treated by Communists as an area detached from politics and social relations, but rather as an expression of political life, Jiang Qing posed the connection between culture and politics much more sharply and dramatically than did other cultural figures.

After 1949 the main theoretician of cultural work was Zhou Yang, who had been active before liberation in the organisation of art troupes and propaganda teams. From his experience of work in the liberated areas, Zhou drew the conclusion that the correct approach was that of 'reforming old opera gradually, first in content and then in form. . . . We are . . . opposed to the viewpoint and method of those who regard the whole of the old opera as feudalistic and therefore assume an attitude of completely discrediting it. . . . We should realise that, as the political consciousness of the masses rises they will naturally become critical towards

the feudalistic and retrogressive traits of the old opera and discard them'. Zhou assumed that this 'natural' process of re-orientation would continue after liberation, so that the 'harmonious' solution of intellectual conflict would be possible (Zhou Yang: 'The People's New Literature and Art' in *China's New Literature and Art*, Peking 1954).

During the Cultural Revolution the appeal to 'natural' transformation came under attack. Indeed, one of the most important theoretical elements of the Cultural Revolution was the assignment of an active place to ideological structures in confrontation with a theory of their inevitable passivity and subordination to the economy. The dominant theme of the Cultural Revolution was not the 'two merging into one' of harmony, but the 'one dividing into two' of the discordance of continuing class struggle during the socialist period of transition. A further factor in the debate was the break with the Soviet Union after the sudden withdrawal of technicians and the initiation and continuation of a critique of Russian methods of work in the countryside, in industry and in culture. It is interesting to note that Liu Shaoqi, President of the Republic, displaced from office during the Cultural Revolution, was reported as saying of one traditional opera which was revived and criticised in the 1950's and early 1960's: 'It doesn't matter much if it is staged. It has been performed for so many years; didn't New China emerge in spite of that?' In other words, does culture carry any political weight? This question came very much to the fore in the Cultural Revolution and carried a resonance which was felt far beyond its place of origin.

In 1963 Jiang Qing worked with a theatre company in Peking to produce a new Peking Opera on a modern theme, *The Lakeside Village*. When it was performed in Peking, Peng Zhen, the mayor, having seen a performance, dispersed the company, effectively preventing the work from being seen again. It was at that point that Jiang Qing moved to Shanghai and began to organise productions there. Around this activity the 'Shanghai group' was formed, and within five years all of its members had seats on the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the Communist Party. Whatever his differences with the Shanghai group, their success was only made possible by Mao Zedong's support. In Shanghai there were difficulties similar to those in Peking: the mayor and First Party Secretary refused to attend performances of new model Peking Operas such as *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, and attempted to have them banned, but at the same time there were strongholds of the new practice: a local newspaper, *Liberation*, sympathetic factories – in short, a political base. The importance both of political support and of the place occupied by cultural production can be illustrated by the argument over a play by Wu Han, deputy mayor of Peking, *Hai Rui Dismissed From Office*, which was read as a direct attack on Mao Zedong and the 'Yan'an spirit'. Jiang Qing

72 tried to get a criticism of it published in Peking, but failed. Yao Wen yuan succeeded in publishing a criticism in the Shanghai paper *Wen hui Bao*, sparking off a debate which led to the dissolution of Peng's group. Mao Zedong commented: 'Yao Wen yuan's article is also very good: it has had a great impact on theatrical, historical and philosophical circles. Its defect is that it did not hit the crux of the matter. The crux of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* was the question of dismissal from office. The Jia Qing emperor dismissed Hai Rui from office. In 1959 we dismissed Peng De huai from office. And Peng De huai is Hai Rui too' (Stuart Schram, ed: *Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed*, Harmondsworth 1974, p 237). The general political conflict, of which opposition over the theatre was only a part, achieved perhaps its most spectacular moment when the Shanghai Commune was set up in February 1967 (and deliberately named after the Paris Commune). Jiang Qing gained direction of the film industry. Yao Wen yuan became editor of the national *People's Daily*, and Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, their allies, assumed leading positions in the local Shanghai Party and nationally as well. In the last few months this group has suffered a reversal in political fortunes, but it is important to emphasise that the films shown at the National Film Theatre are products of the period of their cultural dominance and should be read as such.

During the Cultural Revolution the economic and the subjective were inter-linked in the priority given to the work of transforming the superstructure: 'To transform the cultural and educational positions according to the image of the proletariat is more difficult and complicated than to seize political power and change the system of ownership' is a typical statement of this outlook. The transformation of the world according to the image of the proletariat, it was predicted, would arouse antagonism: 'The proletarian revolution in the superstructure impairs the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie within the Party, it is therefore bound to meet with its desperate resistance.' In the context of this formulation of the problem, a particular aesthetic was developed in the theatre and cinema, that of the demonstration and exemplification of two-line struggle, which in its turn allocates a particular relationship of the audience to the film material. By engaging with the film, any individual would experience in him/herself the conflict between two kinds of subjectivity, or rather two ways of describing and reproducing themselves as subjects – bourgeois individualism and class consciousness. In order to accomplish the revolutionary task of transformation, those feelings described as 'bourgeois individualism' had to be transposed, recathected to the class struggle. It is notable that in *Azalea Mountain*, and to a lesser extent in *Hong Yu*, there is an emphasis on the retrograde nature of the desire for personal revenge, and a striving to replace it, or rather to channel it into a general political and collective

endeavour. According to the actors who came from the old Peking Opera, their new work meant that they were forced to transform their political thinking before they could portray a model proletarian heroic figure. The actress who played Ke Xiang in *Azalea Mountain* commented: 'It turned out that what I had learned in the old school not only did not help me portray Ke Xiang but became the biggest obstacle to my acting. The first problem was that I did not have the proper thoughts and feelings for my part' (*China Reconstructs*, v 25 n 8, August 1976). Training in the *liang xiang* symbolism of pose also operated as an obstacle to those who began to work on more naturalistic projects. Li Xinming, who plays the lead in *Spring Shoots* (not yet seen here, but the centre of great controversy in China after Teng Xiaoping walked out of a performance, denouncing it as 'ultra-left'), has written about her difficulties with her role: 'In the past whenever I acted a heroine I would hold my head and chest high. In real life, however, I found heroes most unassuming because they are deeply rooted amongst the masses' (*China Reconstructs* v 25 n 6, June 1976). In her article Li Xinming points to a central question of the aesthetic: how do you represent an exemplary hero in such a way that he or she is recognisable to the audience at the same time as drawing lessons from a 'real life' where such heroes might be unrecognisable, and where a part of their heroism might consist precisely in that?

Teng Xiaoping, in walking out of *Spring Shoots*, was criticising the aesthetic practice, visible in most of the films shown at the National Film Theatre, of having one main heroic figure with an already formed political consciousness whose struggle against a leading villain educates, attracts and transforms the politics into which they are inserted, often from the outside (*Azalea Mountain* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* are good illustrations). According to Teng this is 'unMarxist' because it represents only 'a single flower'. His criticism indicates an aspect of the debate over the twin terms of 'revolutionary romanticism' and the 'positive hero'.

In the production of model Peking Operas during the Cultural Revolution, there was developed the aim of 'combining revolutionary realism with revolutionary romanticism'. Realism consisted in the portrayal of the working class as the makers of history, romanticism in the mode of portrayal, which eschewed, at that point, naturalism. The model operas, like the later films, became the bearers of a cultural-political *prise de position* which takes as central mechanisms identification and idealisation. The argument is summed up neatly in an exhortation from *China Reconstructs* v 25 n 8, August 1976: 'Persist in the principle of creating characters in which the best and highest of the working class is portrayed, unrestricted by real life and people. Take these characters from life but portray them higher than life. Bring out

74 the character of such heroes by putting them in the thick of sharp class struggle. Give prominence to positive characters among all the characters, to heroes among the positive characters, to the principal hero among the heroes. Create special environment, character and personality and use all kinds of artistic media to make the proletarian heroes stand out. Reveal the heroes' inherent communist spirit. Unify their common characteristics and their individual characteristics.'

The dominance of the positive hero was a direct outcome of the lines developed in the argument over Peking Opera, where Jiang Qing declared that the 'artistic exaggeration' inherent in the form had tended to make the villains more interesting and striking than the heroes and that this balance had to be redressed. At the same time conflict sharpened over the aesthetic choice between the presentation of opposite poles of attraction in different figures and the representation of 'middle characters', who combined negative and positive characteristics. The argument for giving 'middle characters' pride of place in the centre of the stage, was that they were more 'true to life'. Thus once more the argument circled around the mode of representation of the 'real' and its constitution (see the *Forum on Literature and Art*, Shanghai 1968).

III The Films: Politics

As we remarked earlier, the seven films at the National Film Theatre all came out of the lines developed during the Cultural Revolution and thus help to show some of the features of this aesthetic. Each film is remarkable for the way in which, during the opening sequences, the political problems which the film-makers are attempting to pose are spelled out. In *From Victory to Victory* the question is: 'Why is it that after a successful battle it is sometimes best to retreat rather than plunge immediately forward into another attack?' In *Breaking with Old Ideas* it is: 'What sort of educational institutions and methods are most suited to the needs of the peasants?' *Hong Yu* poses the problem: 'What sort of health service is needed in the countryside and how is it to be constructed?'; and *The Pioneers* asks: 'Is China's economic backwardness the result of colonial domination or of some basic geographical lack?' Each film takes up its problem and grapples with it through twists and turns in the plot, political argument and debate between the principal characters, leading sometimes to open and violent conflict. Each film also deploys an iconography by means of which the spectator is provided with a privileged position in relation to the events witnessed. Much of this iconography seems to be taken from the opera. Even the most naturalistic, *Breaking with Old Ideas*, delineates principals from the rest

by the use of make-up; amongst the principals villains are easily distinguished by the use of a pallid, greenish tinge to their skins in contrast to the healthy freshness of the peasant heroes. The claustrophobically enclosed space of the landlord's house in *White-Haired Girl*, where the wicked Confucian mother sits surrounded by antiques, is echoed in the settings of the meetings of the Guomindang generals of *From Victory to Victory*, in their darkened smoky rooms with baize-topped tables, jade horses poised for flight on old carved side-tables. The Liberation Army, on the other hand, meets in sunlit rooms or, at the moment of decisive victory, poised on mountain tops in the open air. In *Hong Yu*, as in *Red Detachment of Women*, the most testing moment for the hero comes during a thunderstorm, where the forces of nature illuminate and underline his achievement. It is important not to flatten out the films by forcing the representation into a single meaning: each of them has a complex imagery and symbolisation which have to be understood in their specificity. But it is also important to note that the positive class hero/heroine is always opposed at some point in the various plots to a negative class enemy, and this is always visible to the audience. We always know who is right and who is wrong. In *Hong Yu*, even without the privileging moment of the film-within-a-film flashback sequence, the villain is easily 'discernible' as he sits shrouded behind mosquito nets whilst his wife waits on him. In *The Pioneers*, the enemy within the Party offers cigarettes out of a case and foreign liquor, while the exemplary worker and the political commissar roll their own cigarettes and drink tea. The audience enjoys a supremacy of knowledge which brings with it a certain exemption from the work of deciding who the class enemy really is, and in some ways belies the complications of the enmeshed contradictions which emerge during socialism.

This observation marks a certain reservation about what the politically educative effectiveness of such exemplary and somewhat moral tales can be, and it is worth exploring more closely some of the plot features. The 'positive hero' is, in *Hong Yu* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* for example, conscious of the exemplary nature of his role in the struggle in which he is engaged. In *Hong Yu* this hero is a boy who has learnt about the corrupt practices of the old quacks, in *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a man who was once a cowherd and who received his education in Yan'an, bypassing traditional institutions. Their heroism does not lie in their grappling with the contradictory demands of individual conscience and social mores, which is where it is often situated within bourgeois drama, for extremely determinate reasons, but rather in the posing of a relationship between the vanguard and the masses through the logic of their actions and consciousness. In order to have a vanguard that can be presented in this way, it is necessary to have a conception of the 'correct' political line and tactics.

There is a sense in which there is a correct line always already there in the films – it is a presence, rather than something which has to be constituted. In *Azalea Mountain*, it is the Communist Party. In *The Pioneers* and *Breaking with Old Ideas*, it is a tendency within the Communist Party. In *Hong Yu*, it lies in quotations from Mao Zedong. The hero is exemplary because he or she is a bearer of this line and uses it in action and in interpretation. The hero both has the will to revolt (revealing inherent Communist spirit) and a desire to articulate that revolt in relationship to a particular political orientation and understanding. Thus in *The Pioneers*, the exemplary worker Zhou Tingshan is enabled, by a study of *On Contradiction*, to grasp and understand the central problem facing the team and therefore to resolve it. But the existence of positive heroes also, of necessity, focusses attention on the way in which their politics are expressed.

Hong Yu and *Breaking with Old Ideas* both contain explicit references to the 'Yan'an spirit' and the present political conflict and tasks as a continuation of the Liberation struggle. In this context, the rather militaristic references of the texts should be noted. In *Breaking with Old Ideas*, the ex-cowherd is asked to go to the Labour University in these terms: 'Want to do some fighting? Yes, storm a stronghold?' – the stronghold in this case being the educational apparatus, posed as being in the hands of bourgeois ideologists and even, at one point in the film, 'foreign journalists'. Hong Yu is handed as he goes for his training a water-bottle captured by his father from the Japanese, asserts his right to go on the grounds that children participated in the Long March, and when in conflict with the quack doctor about the treatment of a woman suffering from flu, refers to the patient as 'ground the proletariat has already occupied'. There is a distinct impression that Clausewitz's dictum has been turned on its head and that politics has become the continuation of war by other means.

The 'Yan'an spirit' also evokes the situation of a small but determined vanguard. *Breaking with Old Ideas* can find its political resolution in the arrival of a letter of support from Mao Zedong, much in the manner of the *deus ex machina* of classical drama which was neatly caricatured by Brecht in *The Threepenny Opera*. The vanguard in *Breaking with Old Ideas* is apparently an encircled minority, needing external intervention to validate its position.

The existence of the twin poles of attraction – positive hero and villain – also demands consideration of the other characters, who have to be won over to one position or another. They are often held back for different reasons: over-caution, in the case of the production-brigade leader in *Hong Yu*; commitment to tried technique, in the case of the engineer in *The Pioneers* and the Dean in *Breaking with Old Ideas*. However, both *White-Haired Girl* and *Breaking with Old Ideas* present another sort of figure – a heroic representative of the masses, who in his/her specific combination

of strength and weakness constitutes a particular object of desire for the representatives of the Communist Party. 77

The White-Haired Girl is a ballet based on a story produced and performed during the Anti-Japanese war. The story has gone through many changes before its present form (in earlier versions the girl is raped and left with an illegitimate child by the landlord's son). The foundation of the story lies in tales of women driven mad and forced into isolation by oppression, which were recorded in Sichun, Hebei, and Yan'an (Edgar Snow recounts one such experience). The story was first written down in 1945, and its authors were awarded the Stalin Prize.²

Xier, who becomes the white-haired girl, is demanded in payment of her grandfather's 'debts' to the landlord, and after his resistance and death is taken as a slave into the landlord's household. Her betrothed has already left to join the Red Army. Enraged by her new situation, she is helped to escape and retreats to the mountains, vowing 'I will become a storm, I will become thunder that shakes the nine heavens'. In the course of her escape and confrontation with the elements and wild beasts her hair turns white and she herself becomes almost a force of nature. Taking refuge in a ruined temple, she confronts her oppressors, who have been driven there attempting to escape from the united force of the peasants and People's Liberation Army, in which her former betrothed is an officer. Xier appears to her past oppressors, and they mistake her for a ghostly spirit, and are thus confounded by their own superstitious fears – the religion which once oppressed her now works for her. When the Liberation Army approaches she flees, but is glimpsed by her former betrothed, who follows her to the cave in which she now lives and persuades her to rejoin her fellow peasants and to join the Red Army. In the final moment she is handed a gun.

The White-Haired Girl is rich in suggestive metaphors. What is important for present purposes is, first, the fact that if the complaint was that ghosts dominated the stage, in *The White-Haired Girl* we see the ghost made flesh and blood: *mistaken* for a ghost by her oppressors, she is *recognised* by her fellow villagers and the People's Liberation Army as a potential comrade-in-arms, and her humanity is affirmed by the recognition. This is, in a sense, the revolutionary laying of the ghost. Second, Xier represents a particular combination of weakness and strength, which turns her into a figure of poignant isolation as well as a desirable ally. It would be wrong to argue that Xier is an object of desire for the liberation struggle because of her betrothed's trajectory, for he functions solely as the moment of recall to society. In that sense,

2. See Lois Wheeler Snow: *China on Stage*, New York 1972, for a history of ballet in China. The book also reprints the scripts of *The White-Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*.

78 *Red Detachment of Women* is a much more romantic film, charting a love-story. Xier is weak, in the sense of being left undefended; she is strong in the sense that she takes her individual chance to escape – dares to struggle – and by joining with the general struggle, dares to win. It is precisely because she has made her individual choice that she constitutes an object of desire.

In *Des Chinoises* (Paris 1974, English edition forthcoming), Julia Kristeva claims that this represents the 'disarming heroism' of the feminine. If so, the notion of the 'feminine' has to be extended beyond a study of female characters. For in *Breaking with Old Ideas*, a young man, the only potentially proletarian figure, the blacksmith, is represented as similarly weak. Too shy to speak his desire to join the college, he has to be spoken for by the new principal; as words are spoken on his behalf, he blushes with embarrassment. Alone amongst the students he accepts the humiliation of expulsion, and has to be pursued by the bearer of the correct line back to his smithy, where he is clasped in an emotional and tearful embrace and then persuaded to return to the college. The dual moment of escape and return, through a character whose specific combination of weakness and strength is rather precisely pointed to in his job of blacksmith, suggests a wider conception of what constitutes an object of desire for the Party representative than a simple account based on male/female might give. It also suggests the continuation, and new beginning, of the articulation of a more complex notion of the proletarian hero.

IV The Films: Imagery

To give a full account of the films would be impossible here, given their individual complexity. All that we can hope to do is to signal points of reference and discussion for future work. However, we feel it is important to deal with two elements of the cinematic discourse present in the films: first, briefly, with their visual style, and second, at more length, with the complex imagery which they have in common.

Any detailed discussion of specifically cinematic features such as the use of camera and montage would best be initiated by a study of a single film, and we hope that such a study will be published in a future number of *Screen*. Nonetheless, certain generalisations can be made. Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan report (op cit) that Chinese cameramen tended not to have a conception of the possibilities of a mobile camera, still using a montage shooting style. They link this to weaknesses in sound technology and lack of knowledge of the documentary tradition. In the films shown at the National Film Theatre, camera movement is in

fact quite prominent, particularly in *Hong Yu, The Pioneers* and *From Victory to Victory*, but without abrupt shot changes being abandoned. In these films, the camera plays the part of a privileged eye, which by a combination of movement and editing can emphasise the position of the spectator as privileged. The Peking-Opera films are intended basically as records of a theatrical performance, but in some of them, notably *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (not included in the National Film Theatre season), camera position and editing are used to break the confines of the proscenium arch, once again emphasising spectator privilege. In the fiction films, montage is used especially to produce a series of evocative images, external to the action yet providing an important level of connotation, that of symbolic commentary.

In the final part of our discussion, we would like to begin to explore this more fully. Our reading, based on limited access to the material, can only be preliminary. It traces the manifestation of words and images referring denotatively to 'mountains' across some of the films shown, and relating them where appropriate to the work of Mao Zedong, given that he, as bearer of the revolutionary word, operates as a simultaneous presence and absence within the films we have seen.

It seemed that, in this context, to start with *Azalea Mountain* would be best. The azaleas of *Azalea Mountain* are 'red with martyrs' blood', the mountains themselves directly connected to the first moments of the constitution of the liberated areas. In 1927, after the Guomindang assault on proletarian bases in the cities, Communist forces regrouped in the Jinggang mountains, and eventually set up the Jiangxi soviet, from which the Long March set out. *Azalea Mountain* is set in 1927 in an area adjacent to Jinggangshan, but also other than Jinggangshan, so that Jinggangshan functions as a reference place – the place where the struggle is being organised and from which the Party representative has come. One of the important aspects of the struggle is winning over 'bandit' groups by teaching them new modes of struggle and a new conception of what that struggle involves. In *Azalea Mountain*, as in *From Victory to Victory*, one of the key questions is 'Why withdraw?'. Learning this tactical and strategic lesson intersects in the film with learning how to recognise the Communist Party. Right at the beginning, after rebellion has been attempted and failed three times, it is asserted that 'What we've got to do is find the Communist Party'. When the Communist Party presents itself, it is, rather disconcertingly, in the figure of a woman. Under her leadership the group begin to ask the question 'Who is the target, who is the ally?' Early on they capture some of the landlord's goods and his men. They want to beat his employees and keep the goods. Ke Xiang, the Party representative, asks them 'Which of you has never worked for the landlord?' and gives a first lesson in class analysis and the basis of alliances. She

80 also insists that they distribute the captured grain to the peasants.

Ke Xiang's strategy is based on 'retreating in the face of overwhelming enemy force' and the group have been given orders to join up with other sections. When the enemy capture Granny Du, adopted mother of Lei Gang, the leader of the rebel group, Ke Xiang puts class feeling 'deep as the ocean' and political priorities before individualistic feeling because of the inevitability of defeat if they are lured down into the town. Lei Gang, however, ignores her directive and advice and goes alone (the condition of individualistic action) on a rescue mission. He is caught and imprisoned along with his adopted mother. This doubling of the human bait splits the peasant force into a faction committed to Lei Gang, and one loyal to Ke Xiang. Faced with this imminent split, Ke Xiang changes her strategy and organises a rescue mission. Lei Gang's deputy attempts to suborn those who remain behind and lead them into a trap. He represents the enemy within, a member of the landlord class who is in private opposition to the local landlord because of a dispute over his ancestral burial grounds. The arguments of the negative character are two-fold through the film: first, an appeal to local feeling in the claim that Ke Xiang is only prepared to leave the region because she doesn't come from there and doesn't understand their situation; second, an appeal to male prejudice and the fear that they are being misled 'by a woman'. Ke Xiang wins the peasants' acceptance and their recognition of her leadership because she is able to supplement the word of the Communist Party by her own example, even to the point of risking her life for the sake of the unity of the peasant force. Although her being a woman presents greater scope for the men's resistance, and so makes the two-line struggle more acute, this is to some extent compensated by her maternal function, continuing that of the adopted Granny Du, who originally initiated the search for the Communist Party. Ke Xiang makes the rebel group new sandals, binds their wounds and teaches them to read and write.

There is a sense in which this maternal function of woman remains central but uncriticised in all the films. In *From Victory to Victory* exclusion of women from the army means that they remain behind in the villages, engaged in production and child-care as well as the organisation of local defence units. At one point a young husband and wife have an argument about who should fight and who should stay at home and look after the children, but the challenge is localised and subordinated to a question of political difference: the young man is uneasy about the strategy of retreat and would rather remain to defend the village; in that case, the wife responds, you can look after the baby too. One of the high points of *The Pioneers* is the arrival at the drilling site of the women, who have come to do the cooking, to support the oil workers by their domestic labour. The men have prepared a meal, which the women eat. But it is made clear that

whatever the resourcefulness of the men, the women will now take over. *Azalea Mountain* contains this important difference, that in the characterisation of Ke Xiang, the Communist Party as maternal figure is being developed in a break with the usual characterisation of unmarried but paternal authority. It is worth noting that *Azalea Mountain* was an important film in the movement to criticise Confucius and Lin Biao.

Once the rescue is successfully completed, Lei Gang realises his error in putting individual feeling (for his adopted mother) before class feeling (allegiance to the maternal representative of the Communist Party). As the principal character whose ideology changes, he learns this restructuring of feeling through the example of Ke Xiang, and at the end discovers that she had let her husband die in similar conditions, and through that experience had learnt to 'swallow grief and keep the world in view'.

The climactic scene in *Azalea Mountain* occurs when Ke Xiang and her small group return from the rescue of Lei Gang and Granny Du by way of a perilous gorge, arriving just in time to relieve the remainder holding the mountain stronghold from the pressures on them to desert. There is a correspondence between this gorge, thought uncrossable, but which the Communists get through, and Huangyangjieh, the most perilous pass in the Jinggang mountains, which is described by Mao Zedong in his poem 'Return to Jinggangshan' in these terms: 'Once Huangyangjieh is passed, no other perilous place calls for a glance'.

In being placed in geographic contiguity to the Jinggang Mountains the events depicted in the film can be read as a representation of Mao Zedong's struggle at that time and the difficulties of its extension to the rest of China. It is a place where the peasants' self-defence force is developed and organised ('bamboos grow apace') and lessons are paid for in blood. The setting is dominated by the various reds of azaleas and dense bamboos. The insistence of the azaleas through all the mountain scenes offers a level of identification of meanings for the spectator, a constant reference to lessons already paid for by the people, represented in the film by Ke Xiang's dead husband and the Communist Party member who is killed in the rescue operation, and at whose death the azalea is foregrounded. An implication is that the people must be prepared for a further shedding of blood in the continuing political struggle.

References to mountains and mountainous scenery almost invariably privilege these connotations of the revolution and its history. In *From Victory to Victory* the need to win is posed in terms of a threat to Yan'an, many miles from Shandong where the battle we witness is taking place, but similarly mountainous. Nearby the peasant militia is preparing for supportative fighting in their mountain base, whilst the army successfully defends 'Phoenix' Mountain and 'Sky' Peak. *Breaking with Old Ideas*

82 begins with scenes from mountainous East China, where the ex-cowherd is working on a State plantation, successfully navigating a rapid river on a raft of logs. When he moves to the University he expresses their objective thus: 'The Anti-Japanese Military and Political College trained large numbers of cadres for the revolution in caves. Today we will train a new generation of successors to the revolutionary cause in these mountains.' The students repeat that experience of self-reliance, building the college out of bamboo and other local materials. The site is chosen 'far from the city, close to the lower and middle peasants', contrary to the wish of the Vice-Principal: 'We'll build our lecture buildings, library and laboratories on the other side of the river. Fine scenery, fresh air and easy to get into the city.' Desire for the city is posed within the films as refusal of 'the grass roots, the mountain regions', and denial of class origin through change of dress from cotton work clothes and the rope sandals that 'the Eighth Route Army won its decisive victories with' to Western-style jacket, shirt, trousers and patent leather shoes. The abuse of the college is shown through the young boy who is forced by his father to use his skills in the private sector, gaining money by over-charging for castrating pigs.

The articulation of the town/country opposition is highlighted by the stress on mountainous regions with their connotations of difficulty and revolutionary purity – 'scaling the heights'. The mountains are as yet uncultivated, in a double sense: economically they are the place of untapped resources (raw materials, agricultural development), politically they contain the incompletely transformed peasantry, representing work which still needs to be done. Together the stress on reaching the most inaccessible areas signifies the wish to 'cultivate' the whole of rural China.

The opposition is inflected somewhat differently in *The Pioneers*. There, a plan for the integration of town and country, presented in terms of building the town as the main priority and exploring the oil field as secondary is rejected as premature and diversionary, an attempt to direct the work of the teams away from the main task of making China self-reliant in oil. The model workers want the work to be moved from Tiensin* village, through 'taming the dragons and tigers' of Dragon Tiger flats, to Nameless Field, where in the end most of the oil will be found to lie and which will, by implication, only be named after the success of the political and economic struggle for oil and self-reliance. In place of the mountains, the site of conflict and work are the isolated, inaccessible and inhospitable regions of the Gobi Desert and the grasslands of Heilongjiang, with their harsh climate and long winters. The credit sequences pose a central question. They are superimposed on a shot of uniform coal fragments extending to the edge of the frame and filling the scene, followed by a shot of stones in the desert. The question lies in their juxtaposition: can such rich reserves be found in such an apparently infertile and inhospitable country?

Feng Chao, the deputy director, follows the line of the Russian advisors for whom he worked and the Americans before them in denying the possibility, in being 'against buried treasure'. 83

The theme of treasure waiting to be 'unearthed' from previously inaccessible areas is important within *Hong Yu*. After his initial training and first period of practice, Hong Yu travels a long distance to find an experienced traditional doctor of whom he has heard, to get a prescription from him for an old stone-mason. On a ferry-boat a traveller drops a small box inadvertently into the river and Hong Yu jumps in to save it. There follows, on the shore, a 'recognition' scene, in which the traveller is revealed as the doctor he is looking for, and the casket is identified as containing his herbal prescriptions, his 'treasure chest'. The saving of the secrets of traditional medicine is accomplished by Hong Yu literally in his element, water (*Hong Yu* means *Crimson Rain*). On his return to the village, he goes into the mountains to find the essential plants which until then have grown unrecognised, re-discovers a medicinal spring, and traces the source of the river which is being dammed up for irrigation purposes by the production brigade. In this sequence the mountain is portrayed as the repository of historical knowledge, which has to be re-appropriated by the new generation.

Thus mountainous regions are a constant point of reference for the films, both as an index of the degree to which nature has been controlled and as epitomising the irreducibly natural and elemental within a dialectic man/nature. We can remind ourselves here that such a dialectic was central to the development of the bourgeois romanticism of Western Europe.

In this article we have tried to indicate the importance of studying the interconnection of politics and aesthetics in the cinema of socialist countries. Only by an understanding of the specificity of the politico-cultural conjuncture within which the films are produced can their meanings be investigated.

Checklist of Chinese films shown at the National Film Theatre

Names in these lists have not been transcribed into *pinyin* but left in the Romanisation given by their distributors, to aid reference.

Red Detachment of Women (opera-ballet), directed by Hsieh Tsin, Peking Film Studio, 1970

The White-Haired Girl (opera-ballet), Shanghai Film Studio, 1972

Azalea Mountain (opera-ballet), directed by Wang Pu and Shui

- 84 Hua, Peking Film Studio, 1974
From Victory to Victory, Shanghai Film Studio
Hung Yu (Hong Yu), directed by Tsui Wei, Peking Film Studio, 1975
Breaking with Old Ideas, directed by Li Wen-hua, Peking Film Studio, 1975
The Pioneers, directed by Yu Jen-fu, Changchun Film Studio, 1975

Recent Chinese films in distribution in Britain

Three opera-ballet films are available from Contemporary Films:
Red Detachment of Women, *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* (1970, subtitled) and *White-Haired Girl*. (An earlier – pre-Cultural Revolution – version of *White-Haired Girl* is also available from ETV.)

Hung Yu can be obtained from the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, 152 Camden High St, London, NW1. The print is unsubtitled, but an accompanying English text will be made available shortly. SACU also hold a recent full-length film called *Bright Red Star* (English-language print) and various short films and documentaries made in the People's Republic.



WEEKEND SCHOOL

Hollywood Melodrama

The aim of the school will not be to define melodrama generically, but to explore two aspects of the Hollywood melodrama of the 1950's: its relationship to its ideological background; and its popularity and social role as 'family romance' in the Freudian sense. The school will be held in London on the weekend March 25-27, 1977. Further details and application forms will be available shortly. Application is open to all, but in view of oversubscription to recent SEFT Schools, priority will be given to SEFT members who apply before February 18, 1977. Applications received after that date will be accepted and dealt with in order of their reception.

Paranoia and the Film System*

Jacqueline Rose

' If the image content has been projected onto the P[erception] end, its libidinal cathexis must first have been removed from it. Then it has the character of a perception. In paranoia, the libido is withdrawn from the object: a reversal of this is *grief*, in which the object is withdrawn from the libido ' (Freud: ' A Few Theoretical Remarks on Paranoia,' Sigmund Freud/C G Jung: *Letters*, p 39).

' The aggressive tendency appears as fundamental in a certain series of significant states of personality, the paranoid and paranoiac psychoses ' (Lacan: ' L'Agressivité en psychanalyse,' *Ecrits*, p 110.

This paper emerges from the need to query a semiotic practice which assimilates its own systematicity to an institutionalised psychoanalytic exigency – integration into the Symbolic through a successful Oedipal trajectory. That dissatisfaction with this practice should focus on a film (Hitchcock's *The Birds*) in which the woman is both cause and object of the aggressivity which drives the narrative to a point at which its resolution is coincident with her 'catatonia' is not incidental to the query. The woman takes up the place of the delusion whose progressive real-isation is charted by the film (in the final sequence, Melanie Daniels fights off (sees) birds which are not there). Since her assignment to this place is the price of the narrative closure as well as the symptom of its subversion, it is from here, properly, that the query can be posed.

* This article was first presented as a paper at the 'Psychoanalysis and the Cinema' event at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 1976. That paper has here been modified slightly in response to criticisms and comments at the event, for which I am grateful. Discussion of major problems and future avenues I have restricted to a final Comment.

- 86 The question of hallucination raises a number of issues:
 the pertinence of the topographical concept of regression and
 that of paranoid projection for a metapsychology of film;
 paranoia as the aggressive corollary of the narcissistic structure
 of the ego-function; here, considered not in relation to hallucina-
 tion, but in terms of the imaginary dialectic which is the point of
 resistance to symbolisation;
 the relationship of the latter as *structure* (inversion and reflexion)
 to certain specific codes of the filmic substance of expression which
 may indicate, interior to the film system, the necessity of its own
 dissolution.

Regression and Projection: Development of the Concept and Problems

Freud introduced the groundwork for the concept of regression in the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (*Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London 1953-74, Volume I) in relation to the infant's wishful activation of a mnemonic image during a state of urgency. The infant cathects the mnemonic trace of the desired object as perception. Later on, writing of the hallucinatory nature of dream-cathexes, Freud adduced the evidence of primary memory as explanation of this formal characteristic of the dream: 'We might revert to the nature of the primary process and point out that the primary memory of a perception is always a hallucination' (*ibid*, p 339). The perceptual nature of primary memory can therefore be related to the dream form, but its content (the hallucinatory cathexis of the desired object) is inferred from the latent content of the dream itself: 'That this [dreams as wish-fulfilments] is their nature, is, however, very easily shown. It is precisely from this that I am inclined to infer that *primary wishful cathexis, too, was of a hallucinatory nature*' (*ibid*, p 340).

In Chapter VII of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (*Standard Edition*, Vol V), Freud uses the concept of regression to explain the transformation of dream thoughts into sensory images. Since the lowering of censorship in sleep is sufficient to explain only the conscious emergence of a previously repressed thought content but not its form, there must be a regression through the psychic apparatus which carries the content back to its primary status as perception. Freud insists that the concept is purely descriptive and not explanatory; regression explains the formal transformation, but it has not in itself been explained. The question remains as to what causes the retrogressive movement, and also why the thought travels past the mnemonic image to the hallucinatory revival of the perception. To this second question Freud replies that the dis-

placement of psychic intensities proper to the primary process makes possible the complete reversion to the perceptual system, but he emphasises that this does not constitute an explanation of the phenomena. His reply to the first question – that regression is caused by the loss of motility during sleep – is immediately contradicted by the appearance of hallucinatory phenomena during waking life:

‘ My explanation of hallucination in hysteria and paranoia and of visions in mentally normal subjects is that they are in fact regressions – that is, thoughts transformed into images – but that the only thoughts that undergo this transformation are intimately linked with memories that have been suppressed or remain unconscious ’ (p 544).

The relationship between regression and paranoia is, however, problematic. Freud seems to identify them in this quotation, but six years later, in his correspondence with Jung (Sigmund Freud/Carl Gustav Jung: *Letters*, Princeton NJ 1974), Freud gives some of his most specific statements on the mechanism of paranoid delusion. Their disagreement centres on the definition of ego-libido, crucial for the later consideration of paranoia in its relation to narcissism. Freud describes paranoia as the outward projection of a rejected idea – the content of a desire – which reappears as perceived reality, against which repression manifests itself anew as opposition. Withdrawal of the cathexis is the precondition of the perceptual registration of the image. Hostility to the object is the endogenous perception of this withdrawal. The clinical picture of paranoia corresponds to the secondary defensive struggle when the libido returns to the object: ‘ With a reversal to unpleasure [the libido] clings to the perceptions into which the object has been transformed. . . . The libidinal cathexis heightens the images that have become perceptions, transforming them into hallucinations ’ (*Letters*, p 40). Gradually all the repressed libido transforms itself into conviction in the perceptual image of the projected object: ‘ Delusion is a libido-inspired belief in reality ’ (ibid). Paranoia can be distinguished from amentic and hysterical hallucination on a number of counts. Firstly, in the case of the latter, the image of the desired object is over-cathected with libido and transformed directly into perception via hallucination; secondly, there is no reversal of value. In paranoia, there is first a reduction of libido cathexis; the intensification of the hallucination through a return of suppressed libido is secondary. Furthermore, contradicting his earlier statement in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud states that in paranoia there is little regression: the idea appears as a word through audition and not as a visual image. But, he concludes, ‘ I still fail to understand the undoubtedly secondary visual hallucinations; they look like secondary regressions ’ (ibid, p 48). In ‘ A Case of Chronic Paranoia ’ (1896, *Standard Edition*, Vol III,

88 pp 174-85), Freud's female patient experienced first a sense of general hostility from the external world, then the conviction of being watched, and finally visual hallucinations and voices. The auditory and visual hallucinations were simultaneous; between them they make up the sensory strata of the paranoiac phenomenon.¹

Freud therefore disengages the concept of regression from paranoia, but if the topographical definition is suspended (and this only partially, cf above), the temporal definition is central to his description. The withdrawn libido which has been removed from the image of the object returns to the ego and becomes auto-erotic; return to auto-eroticism could be seen as a coalescence of the two forms of temporal libidinal regression – return both to an earlier object and to an earlier mode of functioning. Aggrandisement of the ego (Schreber) is the narcissistic corollary of the constitution of a hostile object world. Note that in this position, Schreber's identification is with the place of a woman.

Lacan throws the aggressivity of paranoid psychosis back to the ontology of the ego-function. By doing so, he gives a structural grounding to Melanie Klein's description of the paranoid position in the early ego-formation of the child. Aggressivity is attendant on the narcissistic relation and the structures of misrecognition which characterise the formation of the ego:

'This form will in effect be crystallised in the conflictual tension internal to the subject, which determines its desire for the object of desire of the other: it is here that the primordial concourse is precipitated into an aggressive rivalry, and it is from this that the triad of the other, the ego and the object is born' ('L'Aggressivité en psychanalyse,' *Ecrits*, Paris 1966, p 113).

Paranoia is latent to the reversibility of the ego's self-alienation. Furthermore, since the projective alienation of the subject's own image is the precondition for the identification of an object world, all systems of objectification can be related to the structure of paranoia. Aggressivity is latent to the system, but it will also be discharged where the stability of the system is threatened. The imaginary dialectic is the inter-subjective equivalent of the narcissism subtending ego-formation; it is the point of resistance to symbolisation and the disavowal of difference.

Paranoia has therefore been referred multiply:

to the basic ontology of the ego-function;

to the systematicity of discourse;

and, as a clinical manifestation, to a delusional reconstruction of

1. Cf also 'A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-analytic Theory of that Disease,' *Standard Edition*, Vol XIV: the woman *hears* herself being *photographed*.

Hallucination and the Film

Suspension of motility on the part of the spectator allows for a partial identification of the film process with the dream, countered by the greater elaboration of the film system and by the fact that the image perceived as real constitutes a concrete perceptual content in the cinema (the images and sounds of the film itself – see Christian Metz, 'Le Film de fiction et son spectateur,' *Communications*, n 23, 1975, pp 108-35). The counter-flux to a full regression is therefore provided by the film itself. On the other hand, the spectator's identification of the film substance with a fictional world constituted as real partly upholds the pertinence of a comparison with regressive hallucination. With this difference. The hallucination of the dream process obeys the dictates of the pleasure principle and consists of a wishful cathexis of the object. The film 'can please or displease'. Identification of the film with the oniric process stalls, therefore, not on the mechanism of hallucination but on its associated affect. The horror film could be said to insert itself into the space of this disjunction, producing images to *excite* displeasure (always associated with the visualisation/audition of a repressed content), so that it is the reversal of affect which precisely allows the recognition of the repressed image-content in the real. The mechanism comes close to that of paranoia, and it is the specificity of *The Birds* to internalise this mechanism into the narrative content of the film.

At the same time, paranoia could be said to be latent to the structure of cinematic specularity in itself, in that it represents the radical alterity of signification (the subject is spoken from elsewhere). To suggest this is to challenge the idea of the spectator's subsumption into an imaginary totality and to point to the potential splitting of that totality within the moment of its constitution. For the woman, the alterity of signification is the locus from which she is spoken as excluded and also from which she is *taken* as picture – the image representing the moment of freezing of her sexuality (cf Freud: 'A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-analytic Theory of the Disease,' *op cit*).

In *The Birds*, the woman is object and cause of the attack. On the level of narrative, she moves from one form of persecution

2. Cf also Lacan on the difference between paranoia and the dream: 'One could say that, unlike dreams, which must *be interpreted*, the delirium is in itself *an act of interpretation* by the unconscious,' *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (Paris 1932, republished 1975), p 293.

90 (Melanie Daniels is known because she is talked and written about – ‘She’s in all the columns, Mitch’) to another (she is accused of bringing the birds to Bodega Bay), so that the attack of the birds becomes the cause of persecution. And again in terms of the positions of identification into which the spectator is drawn. At two points, the spectator is induced into her place. At the point of accusation, the object of the accuser’s look is the camera itself. When the birds attack Melanie Daniels in the attic (the final attack), a rapid shot holds on a bird, its mouth open, flying into the camera. With a reversal exemplary of the fundamental paradox of identification, Melanie’s hallucination in the final sequence is to fight off non-existent birds in the place of the camera previously identified with herself.³ The identification of Melanie Daniels and the place of the spectator are split into the two terms of an aggressive polarisation, implying retrospectively that the aggressivity of the birds is reversible and self-directed.

By internalising the mechanism of paranoia into the film, *The Birds* releases an aggressivity which finally cannot be contained within the terms of a resolution (see below). But this subversion can be read into the conventions of the cinematic institution itself in a way which indicates the very instability of that institution: the constant lapses of a system which would construct itself according to a rhetoric. Taking another film which belongs in the same cinematic context and which has been the object of detailed analysis, and then a segment of *The Birds*, it is clear that this aggressivity undercuts the stability of one of the dominant framing devices of classical Hollywood cinema.

Paranoia and the Film System

In the crop-dusting sequence of *North by Northwest*, the hero, who has gone to meet the non-existent character with whom he has been mistakenly identified, is attacked out of the sky. A detailed break-down of the segment (Raymond Bellour: ‘Le Blocage symbolique,’ *Communications* 23, 1975, cf also Kari Hanet: ‘Bellour on *North by Northwest*,’ *Edinburgh ’76 Magazine*) has revealed its structuration according to a partially sustained series of oppositions between the subject and the object of his vision. This series is unstable, manifesting a constant tendency towards its own disequilibrium, the points of its rupture being precisely the points of

3. Melanie Daniels does not at this point look directly into the camera; her look is off-screen front (implication of the spectator) and to the place of Mitch Brenner (shot/reverse-shot); this duality raises the whole problem of the sexual differentiation of the structure of aggressivity (see Comment below).

attack. On the level of content only, the source of the attack is referred across the segment into the body of the narrative, and a paradigm of means of locomotion is established whose multiple effectivity can be read from the systems of repetition and duplication which it drives and in which it is caught throughout the film. Each system which can be identified in the film text is overdetermined in its relation to the minutest segmental component or unit of the film; the plurality of the system, its fragmentation into a multiplicity of mutually referring units is the condition of its organisation into a narrative, based on a constant (eternal) return or repetition which determines the possibility of its resolution. The system is fragmented but omnipotent, indicating the submission of desire to the dictates of the law, Oedipus as the terminal zone and mover of repetition.

The micro-system, which constantly doubles back and folds over the terms of its own production, duplicates the process of repetition and resolution which characterises the global system of the film text, to which it thus relates in defiance of its apparent autonomy or closure. In this way the codes specific to the cinematic substance of expression, which seem to escape the impress of the diegesis, are nonetheless bound to it.

' But [the convergent effect of symbolisation] is still inscribed and propagated in [the filmic system's] smallest signifying units through the movement of repetition-resolution in which they are perpetually caught. It is much more indirect, since this movement of micro-elements, including all the specific codes of the matters of cinematic expression except the segmentary codes of the larger narrative units, seems always more or less to escape the narration, whereas it is in fact constantly constructing it. To the extent that, destined by its very nature to specify itself essentially in a gradual progression across relatively small segments, it gives the illusion of ceaselessly closing in on itself, *as if stamped with a kind of symbolic atopia by its material specificity and the extreme fragmentation of its semantic contents*. But the indirectness of the effect of symbolisation is precisely what constitutes its strength. Much more pregnant, since it is incessant, irrepressible, it constantly produces and reproduces, and produces because it reproduces, the major rhyme of the narration, of the story (*histoire*) become narration (*récit*). Like the narration, it resolves because it repeats, and repeats because it resolves, constantly directing itself towards its meaning from the starting point of its lack of meaning ' (' Le Blocage symbolique,' op cit, p 348, my italics).

It is in the relation of repetition to resolution, therefore, that cinematic specificity can be recuperated by the narrative. But not entirely, and the problems that this raises for analysis indicate precisely the points at which the fissures of the system can be spoken. First, the concept of repetition itself which for Freud indi-

92 cates exactly the demonic insistence of the drive, repetition being the sign of an instance which will not be integrated into a constructed historicity. Second, the elision in the coupling resolution/repetition of the points of rupture which constantly undercut the micro-elemental system. Third, the inescapable 'symbolic atopia' of the filmic substance of expression, which is a function of its *material specificity*.

What then is the cinematic code which dominates the segment in which the aggression of a false imposition of identity is objectified into assault? The segment is structured according to the basic opposition of shot and counter-shot which sustains a dialectic of vision (the look) alternating between the observing subject and the object of his vision. The code occults the position of the camera by setting up an opposition between two terms: the observer and the observed. What is seen is the subject himself and what he sees. The opposition is however a lure *in its very structure*. Firstly, the camera has to identify not only with the subject (Thornhill) in order to show what he sees, but also with the object of vision in order to show the subject. The series can therefore only be structured by a partial activation of the potentially aggressive reversal of its system. Secondly, the fact that the camera must identify with both terms of the opposition, and in the place of one of them cannot be assimilated to a subjectivity, reveals its presence *prior* to the point at which it disengages from that opposition, cancels the observer's centrality and subjects the observer and the observed to a gaze whose signified is attack. The opposition shot/counter-shot therefore contains its own principle of instability prior to the moment of its activation.

The process therefore mimes the dialectic of the imaginary relation, while demonstrating:

that this relation is reversible (it is this which Lacan defines as the paranoid alienation of the ego);

that the subversion of the imaginary polarisation is not only a function of the fact that the subject is looked at from the point of its own projection, but that the look can in itself be externalised (delusion of being photo-graphed – cf 'A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to . . .', *op cit*).

The dominant cinematic code of the micro-segment reveals both the potential subversion of the system in the moment of its structuration, and, where it breaks, the fact that the intervention of difference is the point of disruption of the code. What needs to be looked at is the way in which symbolisation bars the repetitions of the micro-system, even as it is appropriated as the means of (an imaginary) resolution on the level of narrative content.

The process whereby the dialectic of the look culminates in the release of its aggressivity is demonstrated again in Bellour's breakdown of the Bodega Bay sequence of *The Birds* (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, n 216, October 1969, English translation from the BFI Educational

Advisory Service). In this instance the terms are duplicated as the sequence begins with the opposition between Melanie Daniels as subject and the object of her look, and then introduces as reply (response to the gift of the love-birds) the look of Mitch Brenner whose object is Melanie herself. I will not cover the segment in detail but point out a few points of the analysis which seem to be symptomatic of difficulties that can be read across into the narrative.

At the point where Melanie Daniels is attacked by the gull, the analysis identifies the attack with the reciprocal gaze of Mitch Brenner whose dominant mobility has determined the structure of the preceding shots of the sequence. The gull therefore represents a type of male violation. But this identification is challenged by the fact that Melanie sees Mitch but does not see the gull, which is shown in an anticipatory shot presented only to the spectator. The introduction of an object which is not seen reintroduces the elision of the subject's centrality which we have found to be latent to the opposition itself, but it leaves the gull without cause, unless the latter can be read in the meeting of looks which syntagmatically generates the attack. The gull would not in that case represent an active male sexuality, but the suspension of its possibility which dilutes it into a relation of caring ('Are you alright?' etc . . .). The gull releases the aggressivity latent to the miming of looks between the protagonists, and takes up the place of persecutory object; but the narrative content of that opposition (the developing sexual relationship between Melanie Daniels and Mitch Brenner) is subverted in that moment.

Furthermore, a retrospective reading of the segment according to the alternations which it constructs (alternation between Mitch and Melanie in the shot) produces, if that alternation is followed through and past the point at which a second shot of the gull breaks the opposition, Mitch in the place of Melanie in the shot of the attack itself. In this position, as Bellour points out, it is Melanie herself who is united with the gull. The sequence therefore contains a potential reversal (the gull is Mitch – the gull is Melanie) which shows, firstly, that the aggressivity is a function of the alternation and not derived from one of its terms, and, secondly, that the object of attack can be fused with the subject of attack by applying the principle of reversibility back along the syntagm. This fusion latent to the first sequence of the film in which the birds are revealed as aggressive, anticipates the transition within the narrative from attack to persecution (Melanie Daniels accused of evil and bringing the birds).

The symbolic atopia of the filmic substance of expression is therefore a function of its grounding in an imaginary structuration; the fact that the latter contains its own principle of instability can be referred to the paranoid characterisation of that structure and its attendant aggressivity, and also to the fact that the imaginary

- 94 is always threatened by an intervening symbolisation. In *North by Northwest*, the symbolic resolution fuses with the imaginary captation of the marital couple, which assures its ideological stability. In *The Birds*, the situation is more complex, because the film internalises the paranoia latent to the cinematic codification.

The Hermeneutics of Delusion

Unlike *North by Northwest* (the detective story which becomes an investigation into the nature of the woman's sexuality) or *Psycho* (detection into a crime whose source is the collapse of sexual polarisation), *The Birds* has no conventional detective content. The film's own tension works between the foreknowledge of the spectator (title of the film), the relative foreknowledge of the main characters (increasing anticipation of attack) and the resistance to knowledge, first of the town and then of the external world. The latter are linked by a series of narrative displacements (Annie Hayworth retrospectively, Mitch Brenner whose displacements in themselves constitute an alternation, and Melanie Daniels, the single journey), and then by a succession of partially abortive attempts at recall (telephone, newspaper, radio) which set up a paradigm of communication systems through the film comparable to that established for means of locomotion in *North by Northwest*.

The system of communication is also the possibility of the action (Melanie phones in order to trace Mitch), as well as its primary instigator (Melanie Daniels goes to the birdshop to collect a mynah bird which should talk, which doesn't talk, which she will have to teach to talk). The film therefore starts on a default of symbolisation displaced onto the absent bird, and then onto the love-birds ('Do you happen to have a pair of birds that are just friendly?'). Its objective could be said to be the establishment of intercourse – sexual consummation between Mitch and Melanie (never represented – the final energy passes between Melanie and Lydia), and the restoration of links between San Francisco and Bodega Bay. The fact that the latter is achieved can be taken as a resolution (with reservations which will be discussed below), but what is most important is the fact that the restoration constitutes an act of persuasion which convinces of the reality of the attack, and disperses it (the birds have started to attack Santa Rosa). The hermeneutic trajectory of *The Birds* is a process of conviction which has achieved its course when the external world recognises aggressivity in the real.

This is the crucial importance of the scene in the cafe (significantly omitted in Truffaut's summary of the plot in an elision that kills Annie Hayworth at the point of the first attack of the

birds on the school)⁴ which shifts between different points of recognition and resistance (recognition by the drunkard and the hysterical mother, resistance by Mrs Bundy whose desexualisation is represented by her age and physical appearance), until the attack itself forces a cognisance which turns the investigation from the reality into its cause – Melanie Daniels. Note that in this moment, all the men have been evicted from the image which shows the group of women crowded together as the support of 'the woman' who comes forward to accuse.

It is from the moment when the town recognises the birds that Melanie Daniels's own relationship to their reality status starts to shift. During this scene a different challenge to the reality of the birds (the birds as hallucination) is depicted by Melanie frantically flaying her arms against the birds whose distance or separation is represented by the glass of the phone-booth itself. Glass, which represents the point of identification of the object which has not yet struck, here assimilated to the act of communication itself which, in the form of the human eye, it already represents symbolically. The relationship between the glass and vision is punned

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4. It seems worth giving the whole of Truffaut's summary here: 'Melanie Daniels (Tippi Hedren), a wealthy snobbish playgirl, meets Mitch Brenner (Rod Taylor), a young lawyer, in a San Francisco bird shop. Despite his sarcastic attitude, she is attracted to him and travels to Bodega Bay to take two small love birds as a birthday present to his little sister, Cathy. As she nears the dock in a rented motor boat, a sea-gull swoops down at her, gashing her forehead. Melanie decides to stay, spending the night with Annie Hayworth (Suzanne Pleshette), the local schoolteacher. Annie warns Melanie that Mitch's mother, Mrs Brenner, is jealous and possessive of her son. The next day, at Cathy's outdoor birthday-party, the gulls swoop down on the picnicking children and that evening hundreds of sparrows come swooping down the chimney, flying all round the house and causing considerable damage. The following morning Mrs Brenner goes to visit a farmer near by and finds him dead, with his eyes gouged out. That afternoon, when Melanie discovers an alarming assembly of crows gathered outside the school, she and Annie organise the children's escape. As Melanie escorts them down the road, Annie is trapped behind and sacrifices her life in order to save Cathy. Melanie's courage during these trials inspires Mitch's love and his mother's approval of their romance. That evening Melanie and the Brenners board up the windows of their home just in time to protect themselves from the enraged birds which drive suicidally against the house, tear at the shingles and gnaw at the doors to get at the people inside. After peace returns, Melanie, hearing a sound upstairs, goes up to the attic to investigate. There she finds herself in a room full of birds which attack her savagely. Finally rescued by Mitch, the girl is in a state of shock. Taking advantage of a momentary lull, Mitch decides to flee. Between the house and the garage and as far as the eye can see, thousands of birds wait in ominous array as the little group emerges from the battered house and moves slowly towards the car' (François Truffaut: *Hitchcock*, London 1967, p 9).

96 constantly throughout the film – Michele's cracked glasses, the schoolroom windows, the discovery of Dan Fawcett, and, symptomatically in a shot only just recorded during a viewing, the shattered glass on the window of the pick-up truck which opens into the camera's field of vision as Lydia rushes – speechless – out of Fawcett's house. Melanie in the phone-booth therefore condenses all these images, and establishes the glass as the anticipatory image of a severed communication (her own speechlessness – bar the negative of withdrawal – at the end of the film), and of the fighting off of an object whose place in the real is no longer assured (known). A play too on the potential transgression of the screen barrier itself. Hitchcock gives a second anticipation of this moment of hallucination: the camera retreats on Melanie as she recoils on the sofa during the penultimate attack of the birds, revealing a space whose signified is nothingness.

We can ask what generates the attack by referring back to the material specificity of the cinematic code of expression, which we have seen too to be resistant to symbolisation, fixing subjects in frozen positions which release an aggressivity only matched by that produced when this fixity is challenged in itself. It is of course in the narrative, in the challenge to the imaginary stranglehold which characterises the relationship of mother and son – Lydia and Mitch Brenner – the son being one of the 'two kids' (exciting a laugh in response from Melanie) who live in the house across the bay.

And it is fully compatible with the constraints of the cinematic narrative space that at one level it should comment that relation. Note for example the set of semantic oppositions which characterises the dialogue between Annie Hayworth and Melanie Daniels when the former describes the mother's intervention/obstruction in the sexuality of her son. Mrs Brenner is not a jealous, possessive woman, she is a woman who is afraid; she is not afraid of someone taking Mitch, but of someone giving Mitch ('the one thing she can't give him – love'); she is not afraid of losing Mitch, but only of being abandoned. Within the terms of this opposition, it is Lydia's fear which pre-empted that released by the attack of the birds themselves, and her fear is in each case of an activity; not of the passive remove of her son, but of the intervention of a term which signifies for her an active abandonment rather than a simple loss, abandonment being the aggressive counterpart of remove. Loss has therefore been activated, and it is the possibility of its realisation which produces the attack of the birds – Melanie brings the love-birds to Bodega Bay and signifies her intervention into the original dyad. (Annie's and Lydia's response to the designation of the love birds is identical – 'Love-birds' 'I see' – and also puns on the visual metaphor of the film.)

We should also note that loss of the object and abandonment by the object are multiply and inversely represented through the film. For the mother afraid of being abandoned by her son, there

is the daughter who was ditched by her mother (Melanie Daniels), and for the loss of which the mother is not afraid, there is the loss of the husband, the dead father, whose picture hangs (in a gesture dear to Hitchcock) over the family drama. That the mourning for the dead husband is not complete is indicated during the only dialogue between Melanie and Lydia in the film, and in the delusion of his continued presence which she describes. There is, therefore, an incomplete mourning in the film, which is the beginning, or pretext, of Lydia's own fear (the end of Mitch's relationship with Annie is justified in terms of the recent death of the father), and the birds are also inscribed in this space – the body of the bird which falls from the picture of the father which has been knocked out of place, and the bird wrought in iron on the firegrid taken obliquely in the shots of Lydia lying in her bed.

It seems important that out of the imaginary relation which constitutes a repression of sexuality, the subject is defined as child. The attack of the birds precipitates the sexuality back into the terms of a caring, a dilution represented not only by the scene on the jetty, but again during the 'consummation' of Mitch and Melanie's relationship (which significantly takes place at the point when Lydia discovers the body of Fawcett) – 'Oh, be careful, please!' 'And you be careful' – through the school itself, and through the position of Cathy who mediates between the three terms of Melanie, Lydia and Mitch (actually sitting up into the shot where Lydia articulates the substitutive denigration of her son: 'If only your father were here!'). Again at the one point where it is not Melanie's own look but that of the child which anticipates or signifies the presence of the birds (the attack on the children's party), the moment is directly preceded by Melanie's self-placement as child: 'Well, maybe I ought to go and join the *other* children.' The attack from the sky conjoins on the subject a deferment of sexuality and an inscription of relations within a framework of protection and dependence. The effect of the aggression is therefore revelatory of its source.

The birds therefore emanate from the inherent instability of the film's own system, overdetermined in this instance by a series of narrative relations which direct the energy of the film around the woman, while also using those positions to comment on its own system of repression; by doing so it subsumes the excess of its own aggressivity into a meta-(psycho-)analysis defined as an act of knowledge. That the film is unable to cope with the aggressivity it releases is most clearly indicated by the resolution.

The Resolution

On two counts the resolution of *The Birds* is abortive. First, the

98 'psychosis' of Melanie Daniels; second, the dominance of the birds visually and on the sound track in the final image. The latter is a function of the paradox that for the world to be convinced of the attack, the birds must be seen to be real, so that re-establishment of communication authenticates the reality of the horror. Yet, if the birds dominate the final image, there is nonetheless a partial resolution within the terms of the oppositions set up by the narrative. The conclusion represents Mitch's self-assertion against Lydia, by his insistence that they leave Bodega Bay and go to San Francisco. To do this he must himself get through the birds, and bring the car which is to be the means of escape to the house. By leaving for San Francisco, Mitch forces together the two opposed terms of his sexuality, Bodega Bay, the place of his repression, and San Francisco, the place of his sexual autonomy. San Francisco is also the place of his activity as lawyer. For Bodega Bay, this activity constitutes a transgression and is classified as illicit (Mitch spends his time in the state detention cells), since it is the law itself which is suspended in the relation between mother and son (Lydia: 'Never mind the law').⁵

The end of the film represents a second resolution which refers this time to the nature of Melanie's sexuality. Remember that Melanie is first defined as a 'practical joker', seen in court for having broken a plate glass window (cf p 96), and is therefore presented as the opposite term to the law. Melanie is therefore defined in the first part of the film as transgression. What the narrative then does is to inscribe this transgression in a wild psychology (also dear to Hitchcock, compare the casual denegation of the Oedipal configuration in the dialogue with Annie) which defines her as a motherless child, thereby opening up the space into which Lydia herself can be inserted. The first six shots of the final ten of the film (starting with the first shot inside the car) alternate between the close shots of Lydia holding Melanie and the close-up of Melanie's own face registering a scarcely perceptible smile in response to the holding of the mother. The series is broken once, by the insert of Melanie's bandaged hand grasping the hand of Lydia, a kind of long-distance echo and reparation of the insert which showed blood on Melanie Daniels's finger after the first attack of the gull.

I would suggest therefore that there is a resolution – the radio the departure, the reconciliation – but this only at the expense of the woman. By defining her sexuality as reckless, her intervention into a more absolute transgression can in itself be presented as a violation, which then unleashes the aggressivity of which she is object/cause. What the birds achieve therefore is the subduing of

5. Except where it takes the form of interrogation by the mother of the son; cf of the scene in the kitchen.

Melanie Daniels into the place of infant (the non-speaking child). 99
It is important that the coded repetitions of the final shots gravitate around Melanie and Lydia, while the camera simply holds on the birds whose insistent presence leaves open and outside this structuration the residual aggressivity of the film.

The Scream

I have not discussed any sequence of the film in detail but rather chosen to suggest some of the ways in which the latent structure of one of its systems of codification can be read across the narrative in the moment at which it tends towards rupture. Essential to this is the constant falling away of the text's own sexuality from the constraints of the code, its effect of dispersion of the system itself (the attack of the gull is generated by *and* breaks the dialectic of the look). I have already mentioned the shattered glass of the pick-up truck which opens into the field of vision following the discovery of Dan Fawcett, and the absence in it of any co-ordinating link with the narrative other than the dispersion or contagion of the horror. In the narrative sequence prior to the attack in the attic, at the end of the attack of the birds on the outside of the house, there is another moment which seems to be suspended in the same space.

When Mitch has blocked off the door through which the birds are breaking, a brief shot holds Melanie in the doorway watching Mitch off-screen; in the next shot Melanie and Mitch are seen together and move into the living-room, the camera trucking right to follow them. At the point where Cathy and Lydia, seated in a background chair, move into the shot, the lights go out in the house and there is a scream (discernible as such on the soundtrack and recorded on the continuity). Immediately after this, the pitch of the sound of the birds is raised, blurring partly into the scream which it echoes and sustains. It is clear from the faces and expressions of the four characters in the shot that none of the people in the house is the source of the scream. The scream is disembodied, marking along with the extinction of the lights (to which it also seems to come as response) the impossibility of holding the four characters in the shot, the clash of the couple man and woman with that of the mother and child. The scream also cuts across the film space into the response which it elicits from the spectator. It is also a woman's scream, the displaced sound of the woman victim of the birds who are to attack her from the bed in the attic, in an assault characterised only by the flapping of wings and the absence of the cry.⁶

6. I realised after working on the film that a detailed breakdown of

Melanie Daniels therefore moves from one position outside the law to another in which her ex-centricity is juxtaposed to the assumption of the situation by the speaking voice of America (the radio). In *North by Northwest*, the symbolic resolution hung on a moment of 'narrative waste' in which Eve revealed the true nature of her sexuality and secured the trajectory for ideology. The episode stalled the action in a film characterised above all by the speed of its movements, and was objected to for that reason in production. In *The Birds*, the woman's sexuality is also redefined as she moves from practical joker to infans. Through a euphemism this regressive trajectory conceals its own transgression and is assimilated to the legitimised family unit ('Someone ought to tell her she'd be gaining a daughter'). But the position of the woman is not only located in this movement of Melanie, but also in the generalised dispersion of the feminine throughout the film, whether stressed (the image of the women in the café) or as an aside (the names of the boats on the quay – Maria, Maria 2, Donna, Frolic). The woman is not only the point of an identification, the place of a recognisable and silent image, but also the site of this constant dispersion which challenges the text's own reading of its libidinal space. The woman in this sense is not only the cause but also the effect of the horror, silenced, the rupture of her own category which can only be represented as one side of a bound (maternal) relation at the same time as it is dispersed across the film space. It is precisely that dispersion, the other face of the woman as infans, which reveals the splitting points of the re-absorption of the family unit into the (paternal) voice of America.

Comment

The article raises a number of problems. These concern chiefly the position of women in relation to paranoia taken both as a structure latent to the film system and also as a mechanism of neurosis (cf below) vehiculed by the narrative of the film in question. Taken in the first sense, paranoia is a pre-Oedipal structure of aggressivity which threatens the stabilisation of symbolic positions in so far as they constitute the social overdetermination of the subject's self-cohesion in the imaginary. It refers therefore to a structure

the soundtrack is called for; most striking is the way in which the birds tend to enjoin silence on their object.

(imaginary) and an energy attendant on that structure (aggressivity), and the relationship between them could be said to preempt the inherent tendency to fissure of any symbolic system. Taken in the second sense, paranoia refers to a clinical phenomenon which veers constantly between neurosis and psychosis, and whose structure can only be posed theoretically through a concept of post-Oedipal sexuality in relation to that of regression and fixation. In the remarks that follow I will try to indicate how these two aspects of paranoia can be related to the position of woman inside symbolic systems, and how this position should be privileged in the discussion of contradictions within a specific ideological form. I should stress that these remarks are tentative; they represent an attempt to deal with difficulties that emerge from the article and which I hope can be developed through further discussion and comment.

1. The reading of paranoia offered in the article is based first on Lacan's concept of the imaginary dialectic. The predominance of the visual register in the Lacanian formulation has made it possible to read that formulation into certain specific codes of the filmic substance of expression. I suggest in the article that this has been done at the expense of those aspects of the phenomenon which cannot be retrieved for a concept of full specularity but which are no less essential to the phenomenon in that they indicate the points of its own rupture. This refers to the aggressivity of the imaginary dialectic, and in the reading of shot/reverse-shot I am using paranoia in this sense. It is clear that, taken in this sense, the structure of paranoia is not sexually differentiated but refers to the reversibility of an ego-structure which is restricted to two terms. In its effective form this is the relation of infant to image and of the mother to infant in so far as the latter is the object of her desire (her intervention introduces a third term but assigns it a place as image). The terms of the Oedipal configuration are present in the imaginary relation, but they are *unassumed* (in both senses of the word). When referring the concept of paranoia to a specific code of the filmic substance of expression, I am using it as a reference to the fundamental reversibility of the imaginary dyad and not to the effective positions of the relation (mother and child). Any number of sexual positions can be charted over that basic dialectic. It is my argument that in *The Birds* there is a tension at work between the recognisable narrative content of the code (man and woman – seduction etc) and this intrinsic property of the code (its imaginary structuration) which in fact refers on two counts to a relation held elsewhere in the narrative between mother and child (Mitch and Lydia, Melanie and her mother (Lydia)). This can obviously only be understood as a process of *over-determination*; I am not positing a general coincidence between narrative relations of the type presented in *The Birds* and

2. The relationship of the woman to the imaginary does not only hold at this level. The imaginary also contains the realm of pre-Oedipality to which the sexuality of the woman is bound; this not only because of her negative relation to the privileged signifier of difference in the patriarchy but also because the Oedipal normativisation which is expressive of that relation demands of her the relinquishment of the primordial object which necessarily persists. This is true of both sexes, but for the boy the substitution can follow the lines of a sexual equivalence. The sliding off of feminine sexuality from its socially determined genital and reproductive position is not just a function of the component nature of sexuality but also contains a repressed reference to the pre-Oedipal relation between the mother and the girl-child. The imaginary dialectic is one of the sites of that reference.

This has two implications for the relation of woman to paranoia. First, in that the woman has a privileged relation to the imaginary dyad, she is bound to the principle of reversibility which it contains (this is simply the other side of my earlier point on the effective form of the imaginary relation). Second, in so far as the woman's relation to the symbolic order is determined negatively, so her relationship to signification is dystonic. It does seem that the emphasis on the imaginary in the discussion of film as a specific ideological form must address itself to the relation of woman to that register, since that relation is in itself a comment on the impossibility of stabilising positions in the symbolic. It is therefore crucial when talking of the film's constant replay of loss and retrieval and the possibility of articulating that loss to transform the position of the spectator in film, to remember that the negativity in question is now only accessible through the sexual differentiation which has overlaid the primary severance.

3. The woman is centred in the clinical manifestation of paranoia as position. Paranoia is characterised by a passive homosexual current, and hence a 'feminine' position in both man and woman. In the case of Schreber, the attack actually transforms his body into that of a woman; this is necessary because the 'state of voluptuousness', which in his delusion is demanded of Schreber by God, is not restricted for the woman to the genitals but is dispersed over the whole body ('dispersed over it from head to foot', Freud: *Standard Edition*, op cit, Vol XII, p 33), and is constant (extension in time and space as a reference to woman's relation to a non-genital, ie un-normativised sexuality). The attack itself is sexually ambivalent – apparition of the foreclosed phallus in the real (Schreber is to be inseminated by God) but also the penetration of the body by feminine tissue; God is also identified by Schreber with the sun which causes difficulties in the German

precisely because it is a feminine noun. More important, the mechanism of paranoia involves a regression from 'sublimated homosexuality to narcissism' . . . 'a fixation at the stage of narcissism' (p 72), that is, the delusion of persecution stems from the subject's narcissistic relation to his or her body when the components of sexuality have cohered but have taken the subject's own body as their object. The implications of the mechanism of paranoia for narcissism lead straight into Freud's paper on Narcissism (1914) on which Lacan bases his concept of the imaginary.

For the woman it is the infantile image of the mother which lies behind the delusion of persecution even where the persecutor is apparently a male. In the case which I mention in the article ('A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-Analytic Theory of that Disease') the woman regressively identifies with the mother in order to free herself from the primary homosexual attachment; the mother is then released as voyeur and persecutor into the place where the child once was at the moment of the primal scene. Narcissism is referred here not only to the choice of object but also to the process of identification itself; it then reappears, as in the case of Schreber, in the symptom of the delusion.

4. Freud states in this case study that the neurotic manifestation is determined not by the patient's present-day relation to the mother but by the infantile relation to the earliest image of the mother. The tension between relation and image can be located in the narrative content of *The Birds* in the gradual overlapping of Mitch's relation to his mother and Melanie to hers, whose culmination is represented by the shots of the final sequence which I mention in the article. Furthermore, the nature of the resolution – containment by the mother signals obliquely the possibility of Melanie's relationship to Mitch, but silences her and reiterates the delusion – seems to me articulate of the conceptual relation here posited by Freud: 'These then are phenomena of an attempted advance from the new ground which has as a rule been regressively acquired; and we may set alongside them the efforts made in some neuroses to regain a position of the libido which was once held and subsequently lost. Indeed we can hardly draw any conceptual distinction between these two classes of phenomena' (ibid, p 271). It is important that for the girl Oedipal normativisation is always achieved on the basis of such a regressive identification. We can say that what *The Birds* produces in the narrative is this advance (resolution) as regression; and the latter pushed to its most extreme form. In my article I suggest that the state of Melanie and this reiteration of the delusion slides into the space of a psychosis which is the undercurrent to the film's system, and cannot be held to the narrative relations through which it is simultaneously placed. Within that conventional narrative space,

104 the dislocation which I have assigned to this place of the woman can necessarily only take the path of a regression. To say this in relation to film is to assign the possibility of fixation to the film-system which acts out on the level of narrative in the film I have discussed the regressive paradigm of its own substance; on another level, this is nothing other than one of the components of its own history.

5. Finally, and more simply, I ask the question, why is the woman attacked? If it seems that I am repeating a question which I have been asking throughout this Comment, it is simply that I am bound to acknowledge that the aggression on the woman's body cannot invariably be read, even in the Hitchcock canon, in the way I have described. For the act of aggression can also be an act of disavowal by the man, the inscribing on the woman's body of the signifier of difference (literally in *Frenzy* – cf the shot after the first strangulation) which the violation in itself represents. The attack on the woman in this sense is the inverse expression of the resistance which I have described from her place in the above remarks. To say that there are also other films in which the resolution of a male identity charts the disintegration of that of the woman (*The Wrong Man*) is merely to point to another version of the same difference.

Edinburgh Film Festival 1976

At the 1976 Edinburgh Film Festival, two special events took place: in the first week, a series of discussions and screenings on the topic 'Psychoanalysis and Cinema', and in the second, an 'International Forum on Avant-Garde Film'. Simultaneously the *Edinburgh '76 Magazine* (ed Phil Hardy, Claire Johnston and Paul Willemen), containing articles relevant to both events, was published as an integral part of the festival. It is important to recognise certain problems in writing about 'the Festival', since an eye-witness account of 'what it was like' would only reconstruct the film-journalists' mythical object: a festival as the sum of film reviews plus 'atmosphere'. However, film festivals have traditionally existed as celebrations of the pleasures of film, articulated across the terms of cultural richness or the circulation of capital; their function is the renewal and stabilisation of the cinematic institution, with its perpetual promise of new visual pleasures ('delicacies' and 'delights') producing a return on an 'economic' (both financial and libidinal) investment. As such the EFF itself is thus no simple event ('August 22 to September 4, 1976') but has to be seen as a specific point of intersection between the cinema industry and what Metz calls 'that other industry' – 'the mental machinery which spectators "accustomed to the cinema" have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films' (*Screen* v 16 n 2, Summer 1975, p 19). The *Magazine* editors characterise this shift of attention within critical discourse, itself part of the prolongation of the institution's pleasurable effects, as a shift from the 'object cinema [to the] operation cinema (a specific signifying practice which places the spectator)'. The object of this review should be to point to at least some of the implications and problems involved in that shift.

The choice of 'Psychoanalysis and the Cinema' was to some extent dictated by the issues explored in the previous year's 'Brecht Event' around the notion of cinema as a social/political practice.

106 A psychoanalytic framework for the event brought its own effects, inevitably manifested in a certain overt resistance to psychoanalysis per se and its corollary, a relatively uncritical acceptance. However, the interplay of the various discourses in the seminar produced another object of study which threatened to exceed the limitations it had set itself. Three major areas of contradiction emerged, their division only providing a basis for their reformulation: 1. the relation of psychoanalysis to historical materialism; 2. the status of the 'two objects', 'psychoanalysis' and 'cinema'; 3. the reading of 1 and 2 through a concept of ideological practice, and hence the relation of the event and similar practices to the present social formation. Most crucially the introduction of psychoanalysis had always to be seen in the context of its *appropriation* within historical materialism, as the theory of the construction of the subject within a social formation. The strategy of appropriation brought with it, however, the marks of its difficulty: a tendency to reduce psychoanalysis to the social or equate the unconscious with the ideological. Two points made in discussion of papers by Rosalind Coward and Stephen Heath helped to clarify the nature of the relation: firstly, that the necessary structuring by symbolic relations to produce the formations of the unconscious is always held in practices and discourses – there is in this sense no 'outside' of a social formation; secondly, that a mode of production depends on subjection to a *process*, not on a fixing – the various superstructures are thus necessary investments in containing the overflow of that process, not static reflections of an economic base. The suggestion in the event's title of an application of one discrete object ('psychoanalysis') to another ('cinema') only preserved the weaknesses of both, on the one hand by making it impossible to question the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis, and on the other by implying the provision of a technical vocabulary merely to enrich critics' descriptions of their own intuitions (the famous 'sense of criticism'). In combination this meant psychoanalysing films in terms of their characters, their authors, or perhaps their spectators; all these perpetuated the practice of 'appreciating films' outside their operation in the cinematic institution. The point is to preserve neither psychoanalysis nor cinema as such, but to pose the functioning of the cinematic institution in film, with psychoanalysis pointing to the area of the production of the subject in that process. Within that project the status of the individual film dwindles, and the concept of cinematic specificity must be prepared to lose its importance other than as an instance of the complexity and variation of that process. The amazement expressed when different psychoanalytical readings of the same film were produced by Jacqueline Rose and Raymond Bellour illustrates the point. The use of psychoanalysis does not provide a key to 'the definitive reading' of a film, book or whatever, but rather shifts the focus of the

argument from the text itself to the work of the text. (The desire for a 'correct reading' is a question on its own.) It is perfectly possible for us all to have different readings; the point is rather the limitation and specification of the terms in which they are articulated. The effects of this loss of the familiar object 'film' can be seen in the outraged press reviews. Arguing for one film over another (*Numéro Deux* rather than *Jaws*) is very readily assimilable by that kind of discourse – witness the recent representation of the 'Brecht Event' as a 'Brecht and Cinema' season at the National Film Theatre. It is necessarily the object 'film' itself, constructed and maintained by its surrounding discourses, including this one, which has to be set in crisis. But as soon as this is acknowledged, the idea that such a pure intervention is ever possible has to be rejected; the present institutions, of which Edinburgh is one, provide the terrain on which ground has to be taken.

This should not prevent a criticism of the overall strategy, in particular the notion of what constitutes an 'intervention in film culture'. In the *Magazine's* introduction it is stated that the struggle in ideology should be 'directed towards the building of a vital film culture in which cultural dominance can be displaced and undermined'. 'Vital' is a significant lapse, itself undermining the strategy in which it emerges. Without a constant reappraisal of the historical situation of such a strategy (why 'British', why 'film', why 'culture'?), it is bound to fall back upon the ideological formation which preceded and partly produced it. It is not mere coincidence that Robin Wood argues in the same terms in the *Times Educational Supplement* for 'the development of a healthy film culture . . . despite the apathy or hostility of the cultural establishment'. 'Leavisism' should not be identified or even founded in the work of any individual, but can be used as shorthand for the complex matrix of determinants which in Britain has produced the strands of radicalism and reaction which not only inform Leavis's work, but appear suitably transformed in contemporary Marxist or progressive critiques such as those of Jonathan Culler (see *Screen* v 17 n 1, Spring 1976) and, I would argue, Terry Eagleton.

In this context a 'theoretical intervention' cannot be made without considering the conditions of its reception and recuperation. The presentation of the event as 'work in progress' bars it from the status of a body of knowledge which can be 'taught'. However, the study of an area of social relations (the cinematic institution) automatically participates in those relations, which in turn affect the process of study. Here it is no longer a question of accumulating knowledge, but of asking: knowledge for whom? how is it to be used? This has to be seen as an integral conjunctural question – a necessary contextualisation rather than an optional addition. The attitude implied in the statement of one speaker at

108 the plenary session that for participants to articulate their feeling of oppression was necessarily to descend to a 'phenomenology of misery' ('... oh, you always get someone who complains') refuses any notion of contradiction: the point is not to get something 'correct' (using 'rigour' as a euphemism for brow-beating), but to grasp the contradictions in the situation and thus to pose that situation differently, a point made by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith.

It is the Women's Movement which is consistently the point of 'trouble' for this and other such events. The interrogation of the very process, not just the results, of those discursive operations through which a subject is constituted has made problematic the notion of subjectivity/objectivity in which political discourse has previously been cast – as referring to a social reality always outside itself. In a sense the question asked, even in its absence, was always: what place does the Women's Movement occupy in history? The very impossibility of assigning it 'a place', of containing it within the economic relations described in *Capital*, for example, as Rosalind Coward pointed out, makes the position from which someone speaks 'as a Marxist' necessarily one of an imaginary unity. It is essential to interrogate the security of a Marxist discourse. The consequent risk is always the lack of a coherent position. The rubric 'Psychoanalysis and Cinema' provided a meta-discourse, but remained a valid currency only so long as its status as production remained unacknowledged. This problem was raised explicitly and implicitly in Claire Johnston's paper, in which she correctly criticises the central weakness of Kristeva's position – her failure 'to deal with the question of how a revolutionary "textual practice" can relate to political practice and to history' except in terms of a solution which is 'in the last analysis ... anarchic in its implications'. Claire Johnston writes: 'The task is not to relativise the Symbolic (in terms of individual subjectivity and in the notion of bisexuality) as Julia Kristeva suggests, but to displace and undermine it through struggle in a project of transforming the Symbolic.' It is only at the end of the article, at a precise point of intervention suggesting the breakdown which becomes manifest when that project is fixed and held in an 'exemplary film' (*Jeanne Dielman*), that another contradiction is produced. Significantly *Jeanne Dielman* has not yet been taken up by a distributor in this country; at the moment where it is seen once again as a 'film-object', an (un)marketable commodity, a different strategy is necessary.

The formal division between the 'Psychoanalysis' and 'Avant-Garde' events (the latter organised by Peter Wollen and Simon Field) distorted both projects; each provided what was lacking from the other. The collision of the two occurred only once, during the screening of Ken Jacobs's *Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son* with Ophuls's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* in the first week. The effect of dislocation was such that a large part of the audience

walked out: the cohesion of the cinema as an institution in which the spectators take up positions had become impossible to sustain – the audience had to demand the return on their investment by simply asking for their money back. Much discussion in the avant-garde forums broached this area, but once couched in terms of an opposition between ‘art’ (film-maker as artist, financed by grant) and ‘industry’ (Hollywood, large-scale commodity production) it became difficult to pursue; to simplify, economic independence from ‘the industry’ became equated with a freedom from ‘that other industry’, the mental machinery which moves the subject as a condition for the retention of its place within ideology. With ‘the two avant-gardes’ (described by Peter Wollen) as the given objects, one tendency was to focus on their similarities through an area of mutual concern (roughly ‘art history’), rather than on their dissimilarities as produced by different socio-political formations. As a result a heterogeneous historical process was often transformed into a homogeneous history of art in which, in Annette Michelson’s presentation for instance, the importance of Marx’s *Capital* became that it would be filmed by Eisenstein; similarly, significant political differences were collapsed into filmic/formal differences. A convergence should not have been anticipated, although the issues raised exist to be used by others. Within the diversity of the American avant-garde, Hollis Frampton’s film *Magellan: The Gates of Death* might be taken as a single instance of some of the problems.

Frampton’s film is a representation of the formal process of narrative which Stephen Heath has described as the dual metonymy of film, ‘the shifting flow of discretely contiguous images and shots [and] the ordering of that flow of images and shots in a coherent relation’. The interminable production in the film of differences within repeated systems simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the memory of the film so that it is impossible ‘to have seen it once’. But in that movement, a formal exhaustion of narrative, the revelation of that construction reinscribes the subject as the bearer of knowledge. The knowledge implied by the film is one of the accepted limits by which ‘film’ can be understood – ‘by making stories’. By privileging the work of the signifiers outside those limits, the film escapes one level of signifieds only to create another, the effect of their absence. The dominant relation established is that produced by a perception-response model, in which perception is taken as uncoded. Attention is focussed on the viewer’s response in front of the film, its effect on his/her consciousness. The subject thus inscribed is one unified by the full presence of consciousness, a discourse without gaps or lapses; the unconscious, in Constance Penley’s words, has been ‘evicted’. Thus the operation of deconstruction inevitably leads to a reconstruction of a different pleasure of film from a position of increased knowledge/consciousness. The political criticism to be

110 made here is not that the films of Frampton/Snow/Sharits 'neglect the masses' as either subject-matter or potential audience. It is rather that their films propose a conception of ideology as a veiling mist which obscures that clarity of vision associated with 'true consciousness'. This clarity can momentarily be gained by the insights afforded, for example, in the process of watching a film: ideology as a barrier to be 'broken through'. Their work thus becomes, in Victor Burgin's words, 'art for a perpetually deferred future'. Paul Sharits's protest at the demand that the Americans take up a revolutionary position – 'I think America's going into a Renaissance and I want to go on and make some really beautiful works' – should therefore have been taken more seriously than it was as a reflection of the scale and status of his particular political strategy. Once ideology disappears as a problem and becomes synonymous with 'changing consciousness' (ideology = false ideas about reality) the demand for 'politicisation' of the avant-garde is always couched in terms of 'more contact with reality'. Anthony McCall's suggestion of a localisation and particularity of situation merely reverses the problem (community projects using Super-8) by isolating the problems of distribution and exhibition, if it implies that the work only needs a bigger audience for it to have greater effect and leaves the type of films to be made and their effects within ideology unquestioned.

The type of work done at Edinburgh over the past three or four years has created a situation from which those sort of questions can be asked in Britain. The context of these events is evident in the light of the recent public dispute over policy at the BFI Production Board, the expansion of the Other Cinema and the formation of the Independent Film-makers' Association. For such work to continue productively, the area allotted to 'film' in Britain needs to be understood historically; practices in and around film do not take place in a vacuum (as an erroneous criticism implies), but in a space produced by history, and before their reciprocal effectivity can be judged it has first to be understood. It has become increasingly evident that film-makers do not just produce cultural objects, and that the processes of distribution, exhibition and critical discourse constitute part of the film text. In the same way, a 'political film' does not by itself guarantee a political reading; it is always a question of the juxtaposition of accompanying discourses. Alliances have therefore to be sought outside narrow job descriptions; neither film-makers nor film theorists can expect to continue in complete isolation. The EFF offers no ready-made solutions; it is held in the very contradictions which it foregrounds, its critical discourse part of that renewal and stabilisation of the cinematic institution. It does however point towards activities which question the limits of that institution, which break with the homogeneity of 'film' as the minimal unit of understanding. Although practices in and around cinema are held in relation to

concrete institutions (the British Film Institute, the educational apparatus and so on), 'the cinema' is by no means a constant area. Alternative practices are needed not merely to fragment that area (since it is exactly a space designed to contain such fragmentation) but to render its contradictions productive.

DONALD MACPHERSON

Cinema Nuovo and Neo-Realism

With the passing of time Italian neo-realism has become not only historically remote but conceptually nebulous. That something existed – or happened – which at the time received the name neo-realism, remains undoubted. But there is an increasing uncertainty (not to mention an indifference) as to what that something was. Was neo-realism an aesthetic practice, or an episode of cultural history? Is it exemplified in the melodramatic 'critical realism' of Visconti? or in the phenomenism of Rossellini? or in the vague humanistic aspirations of De Sica/Zavattini? Or is it merely the product of a situation in which those three (and other) tendencies could be englobed in a single, obfuscating critical discourse? One thing is certain, and that is that neither the idea of the unity of the movement, as proclaimed by its participants and endorsed by outside observers such as Agee and Bazin, nor the rhapsodic evaluations of it current in the 1950's, command much assent today.

The marginalisation of neo-realism is not just a result of historical distance, of a gradual fading away of concern as the cinema progressed in other directions. In fact one of the things that squeezed it out from the forefront of ideological concern in its own country was a revival of interest in a period of film history geographically and chronologically even more remote, that of the Soviet Union in the 1920's. Nor can it be put down simply to a decline in neo-realist production. A broadly neo-realist aesthetic continued to dominate critical discussion (albeit nostalgically) even at times when authentically neo-realist productivity was very low, while, conversely, various off-shoots of neo-realism have taken root in film-making practice, not just in Italy, in the absence of a justificatory discourse. The technical and discursive practices which together form neo-realism have separate histories, interlacing but differently related to their other determinations and overdeterminations.

The dethronement of neo-realism was an effect of the separation of critical discourse and the material conditions of production on the one hand and of a simultaneous critique levelled at it from two different sides during the 1960's on the other. The Italian left continued to talk neo-realism long after the conditions for pro-

112 moting neo-realist production had ceased to exist. The talk went on, in spite of its increasingly utopian character, for as long as the left which patronised the movement remained in a position of aspiring to hegemony in 'culture' while being steadily eroded and losing ground to the right on the political and economic terrain proper. Not surprisingly, therefore, when a critique came to be levelled at the neo-realist discourse in the mid-1960's, the terms in which it was couched were prevalently political, and the politics being expressed were those of an emergent new left hostile to the cultural policies pursued by the 'official' party-political left since the Resistance. It is this essentially political critique which we find articulated in the article by Mario Cannella printed in *Screen* v 14 n 4, Winter 1973/74, originally published in *Giovane Critica* in 1966.

The major limitation of Cannella's article is that, although it attacks neo-realism, it never seriously questions it. What is being attacked is the notion of neo-realism as progressive, nay revolutionary, put forward by the movement's devotees. Cannella argues, on the contrary, that neo-realism was a product of inter-classist politics issuing from anti-Fascism and from the perpetuation of the Unity of the Resistance as an (increasingly retrograde) slogan throughout the post-war period. As a critique of Togliatti and the Italian Communist Party this is plausible (though not, in my opinion, entirely correct). As history, however, it suffers from reducing neo-realism to its political-cultural determinants and in so doing conceding it that unity, on the political-cultural plane, which was so zealously (and falsely) fostered by the very forces Cannella is concerned to attack. For neo-realism was also a lot more (and in some ways a lot less) than what was promoted as the new progressive national-popular cinema in congresses and speeches (and in trade-union meetings) by the 'men of culture' of the post-Resistance left.

To understand this we have to turn to the other arm of the critique, levelled at neo-realism at about the same time but from another quarter altogether. This critique stems partly from Bazin and partly from the *politique des auteurs*. For Bazin, the essence of neo-realism was an aesthetic (and in the last analysis moral) attitude towards 'reality', albeit occasionally contaminated by sociology (as in De Sica/Zavattini) or even politics (as in Visconti or De Santis). The exemplary figure in this ideal construction was always Rossellini, who politically had very little to do with the neo-realist movement at all – or rather had to do with it only in the years in which anti-Fascist unity also comprised Christian Democracy. Bazin's championship passes into *Cahiers du Cinéma* (and into the New Wave – witness the obvious homages to *Viaggio in Italia* throughout Godard's *Le Mépris*), but in the context of the *politique des auteurs* most of the rest of neo-realist production is junked into the limbo of non-authorship. For *Cahiers* in 1960

Italian cinema meant either Rossellini, followed at a safe distance by Visconti and Antonioni, or else the genre production, anything but neo-realist, whose great exponents were Cottafavi, Freda and Mario Bava. 113

The rewriting of film history as a history of great *auteurs* meant, inevitably, a stress on the continuity of – say – Rossellini's fascist films, his resistance trilogy, and the personalistic films of the early 1950's, and a corresponding stress on the difference between Rossellini of all these periods and the equally continuous history of – say – Visconti. This position represents a substantial gain in understanding, particularly when, as happened later, it was enriched by precise analyses of the specificity of each author's work. But it also has obvious weaknesses. Pushed beyond the point of a simple observation of similarities and dissimilarities it is irresistably drawn in the direction of asserting the essential nature of Rossellini or Visconti as artist (or, in a more sophisticated version, of the 'structures', 'Rossellini' or 'Visconti') against the mere contingency of the forces which, in 1945-52, drew them together. But the contingencies were important. *Open City* is historically determined at every level by the politics of the Resistance, and if it is also a 'Rossellini' film it is so only in the sense in which its priest-hero is *also* a representative of God on earth and not just of Christian Democracy (which is not insignificant, given that the politics of Christian Democracy consisted precisely in playing on an equivocation between God and the Italian Confederation of Industry and that Rossellini was a major exponent of this equivocation). The conversion of auteurism into 'cine-structuralism' (eg in the work of *Cinema e Film* at the end of the 1960's) did something to alter this essentialist bias, but more in the direction of dissolving authors into the operation of textual codes (*grandes syntagmatiques* and others) than of creating space in which to chart the overdetermination of the text by the conjuncture. Rossellini is rescued from 'neo-realism' and put back in 'cinema', but in so doing he is also removed from History – or, which amounts to the same thing, history is removed from Rossellini.

To say this does not or should not entail falling back into a simple identification of neo-realism with the history in which it belongs. Just how pernicious, and self-deluding, such an identification can be is exemplified by the recent publication in Italy of an anthology of writings from the magazine *Cinema Nuovo*, originally published in the 1950's and mostly concerned with neo-realism and its successors (*Antologia di Cinema Nuovo 1952-58*, vol I, Guaraldi Editore, Rimini-Florence 1975). The anthology is edited by Guido Aristarco, who was also editor of the magazine from its inception, and is preceded by a long essay by the same Aristarco which attempts to sum up the history of film culture in Italy from 1945 to the present. What is most instantly remarkable

114 about the introductory essay is the sense emanating from it of an 'I told you so'. Not only, if Aristarco is to be believed, were Aristarco and *Cinema Nuovo* always right and most of the rest of the world, except when they accepted *Cinema Nuovo*'s leadership, always wrong, but *Cinema Nuovo* always will be right, because it alone possesses the key to historical understanding. *Cinema Nuovo* alone is the repository of truth and the truth of Italian culture is the truth of neo-realism which in turn is the truth of *Cinema Nuovo* and its editor.

Such embarrassing nonsense would not be worth commenting on were it not for two things. The first is that *Cinema Nuovo* did in fact play a role in helping to ossify Italian film culture around positions which were already quite retrograde at the time the magazine began publication in 1952. (Needless to say this role was not quite as important as the editor would claim and it might be observed that the Italian Communist Party, under whose shade Aristarco was allowed to flourish, was rather more important.) The second is that the self-delusion of *Cinema Nuovo* was made possible by the kind of sub-Hegelian historicism, half Lukács and half Croce, with maybe a soupçon of Gramsci, of which the magazine was an exponent. (Again it might be observed that the Italian Communist Party had something to do with this, though in a devious way, in so far as the Lukácsian stance adopted by *Cinema Nuovo* expressed a mild deviation from the orthodox line, but one which the party encouraged for that very reason.) The idealism of *Cinema Nuovo* was a historicist idealism, which locates truth within history and sees it as the expression of history. What makes this position idealist is its equation of the possession of truth about history (ie knowledge) with that so-called history, which is always to be grasped in its self-expression. Truth in this way becomes guaranteed, with the guarantor being either history itself or the once-and-for-all possessor of truth through whom history is spoken.

The fervently, and indeed pathologically held historicist idealism of *Cinema Nuovo* is present not only in the magazine's delusions but also in the mould into which it attempted to cast the history of the neo-realist movement. When the magazine came into being in 1952, neo-realism was, as the saying goes, 'in crisis'. *Cinema Nuovo*'s response to the crisis was to launch the slogan 'from neo-realism to realism' and 'from chronicle to history'. It is here that the uneasy amalgam of Croce and Lukács is most apparent, for what is being prospected is a move from the basically naturalistic and descriptive mode in which neo-realism was judged to have been until then into a mode of more properly realistic narration (in Lukács's sense). But this passage was also seen, almost in the same breath, as one from the mere chronicling of events to their representation as history – the distinction here being one made by Croce, for whom 'chronicle' offers an account only of events in their pure successivity and externality, whereas 'history' grasps

them in their contemporaneity and accessibility to understanding. 115
A further sleight-of-hand on the part of the magazine enables the word 'history' to be replaced with 'novel' as the opposite of 'chronicle', so that lo and behold we are back with Lukács again and with the gallant heroes of the last century, Balzac and Tolstoy.

What makes a return to these particular figures regressive is not just the fact that they are dead, but that they are recaptured as models of wholeness. The claim for the classical realist novel is that it can somehow represent a historical epoch – capitalism – in all its contradictoriness but in such a way that all the contradictions are perfectly subsumed within the representational fabric of the text itself. Apart from the fact that it is not true that the classical novel does any such thing (or at least that it ever did it fully, even in its heyday), an infinite series of questions are raised as to why the model should be found desirable. In the case of *Cinema Nuovo*, gratification of desire came in the form of Visconti's *Senso*, and partially in the form of Germi's *Il ferroviere*. But for the most part it was destined to remain frustrated. There were countless reasons why 'critical realism' was not going to implant itself in the Italian cinema, but they were not inquired into, since to do so would have involved, among other things, a lucid class analysis of the status of para-Marxist literary intellectuals within the cinema, and any such analysis was precluded precisely by the adoption of the critical realist model itself. Critical realism, in the context of Italy in the 1950's, represents a demand for an imaginary mastery of the historical process on the part of a fraction of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia which was in practice increasingly impotent. True, that is not all it represents, or ever could represent, but as a determination it was sufficiently forceful to inhibit an analysis of why neo-realism was not only 'in crisis' but unlikely to survive.

In fairness to *Cinema Nuovo*, it should be realised what they were up against. The retrograde nature of their theorising should not blind us to the fact that the political struggle of which they were a part – the struggle for a democratic and anti-Fascist culture – was a real struggle, with real and dangerous enemies. On September 10, 1953 Aristarco and his close collaborator Renzo Renzi were arrested, taken to *military* prison and then, three weeks later, hauled up in front of a *military* court, facing possible sentences of up to seven years, simply because Renzi had written, and Aristarco had allowed to be published, a treatment for a film about the activities of the Italian army in Greece in 1940. The army in Greece had been a Fascist army, allied to the Nazis. The legislation which entitled the military authorities to arrest the journalists was unrepealed Fascist legislation, and the accusations made clear that as far as the military authorities and their supporters in government and the legal apparatus were concerned, the years 1943-45, not to mention the post-war Constitution,

116 meant nothing at all, that they possessed the same authority over civilians and former conscripts as they had inherited from Fascism and that attacks on the honour of the Fascist army were still punishable. The prosecution was authorised by a Christian-Democrat government, the Christian Democrats having been one of the Resistance parties and many of their leaders, such as De Gasperi and Gronchi, having been active in exile and in the Committees of National Liberation. Aristarco and Renzi eventually only received suspended sentences, but this was because the public outcry over their trial produced a serious division within Christian Democracy, not exactly between Christians and democrats, but between thorough-going 'clerico-fascists' and residual supporters of anti-Fascist democracy.

What this anecdote reveals (the relevant documents are reproduced in the *Cinema Nuovo* anthology, on pp 493-514) is both the necessity and the dangers of a political struggle conducted basically in terms of democracy. This struggle was imposed, and there was no way in which it could be avoided (nor can it be now, in Italy, Chile, Britain or wherever). The danger comes when the struggle has to be fought defensively – fighting the bourgeois state for control of the soul of the bourgeois state itself – rather than as a fight for more advanced forms of democracy than the bourgeois system can conceive, let alone concede. The Resistance, through to 1947, had been an advanced, offensive struggle: from 1948 and throughout the 1950's the struggle around anti-Fascist democratic demands had entered a defensive phase and no longer possessed automatically any advanced (in context, socialist) content. *Cinema Nuovo* were victims of the this phase of the struggle, both ideologically and politically, and also of what had come before it, which, in the cinema, had been the inter-class populism of neo-realism. The slogan 'from neo-realism to realism', therefore, deserves at least a partial re-interpretation: along with its idealism it also expressed a demand for a re-insertion of socialism into the neo-realist thematic. Realism, for *Cinema Nuovo*, meant the re-introduction of the history of class struggle (as in *Senso*) and of a concept of the relations of production (as, dubiously, in *Il ferroviere*). But the demand was posed idealistically: aesthetically it remained enmeshed in the bourgeois categories of nineteenth-century realism; politically it lacked any possibility of articulation with the working-class movement. 'Culture' having been voided of any class content, and being the object of a struggle within the bourgeoisie (over 'values', 'free expression' etc), there was no way in which that class content was going to be restored, except by class struggle.

The effects of class struggle did eventually make themselves felt in the Italian cinema, but not through the work of *Cinema Nuovo* (and still less its colleague and rival from the neo-realist days, *Bianco e Nero*). Old battles are still being fought, but fortunately

the battle for a new improved neo-realism is no longer one of them. Neo-realism, for its part, is finally being subjected to a critical analysis capable of isolating its components and confronting certain issues which the movement's supporters never dared to confront, not least the survival, within anti-Fascism, of a legacy derived from the culture of Fascism itself. This is a dangerous subject, but an important one, with plenty of implications for the present. 117

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Structural Film Anthology

In ' " Ontology " and " Materialism " in Film ' (*Screen* v 17 n 1, Spring 1976), Peter Wollen argued that the joint concern of North-American film-makers such as Paul Sharits and European ones like Godard with a critique of cinematic illusionism diverged in their respective emphases on the machines producing the illusions, the camera, the gate, the celluloid, the printer, the projector, the screen, and on the signifying process denegated in those illusions, the discursive processes of films, their codes. The first emphasis tends to cut film off from its immediate and explicit involvement in ideology into a closed circle of self-reference; the latter to make that involvement the centre of the film-maker's practice. However, as well as divergence, Peter Wollen sees a tendency towards convergence in the increased interest of the North Americans and their European counterparts of the Co-op movement in signification and an apparent decline of the other European avant-garde.

The Avant-Garde Event at the Edinburgh Festival was organised with this possible convergence in view. Film-maker participants largely represented the North-American independents and the European Co-op movement. However, as Donald Macpherson notes above, the convergence did not take place, and the divisions did not conform to the material/signification opposition. The first session, on the notion of avant-garde, divided the Europeans from the (predominantly New Yorker) North-Americans, who interpreted the criticism offered as ' no different from Tom Wolfe ' (Sharits) and resented the implication of political irresponsibility. Subsequently, the difference, which might have been no more than a matter of local loyalties, took on a more complex political colour, expressed most clearly in the opposition between Joyce Wieland and Birgit and Wilhelm Hein. In her new film, *The Far Shore*, Wieland has attempted to make a genuinely Canadian film (as opposed to a US film), made with Canadian money, technicians, actors, story, distribution and for a Canadian mass audience. In so doing she has abandoned the modernism characteristic not only of *Sailboat* and *1933*, but also of films with similar political pre-

118 occupations to *The Far Shore* such as *Solidarity* and *Pierre Vallières*. It is as if the political and aesthetic sides of her projects were separable. Sharits's aim to emulate Rembrandt in making great works of film art is simply the other side of the coin. For the Heins, on the other hand, the modernism is the political point; information pure of any ulterior motive in communication is the definition of the aesthetic message and the purity represents the freeing of the recipient from ideological imposition. Hence the problems are those of dissemination and of overcoming the mystification of proletarian film-goers. Wieland adapts her aesthetic to a political problem seen fundamentally in terms of distribution; the Heins treat distribution as a secondary problem subordinate to the fundamental one of aesthetic strategy.

Much of the work done by the film-makers of the European Co-ops and that of most of the North-American film-makers represented at Edinburgh could be argued to fit into the category defined in 1969 by P Adams Sitney to place a new type of films after those of Brakhage and Warhol, being made predominantly in New York, but also elsewhere in North America and in Europe: 'Structural film'. In May and June of 1976, the National Film Theatre in London held a short season of films under this title, organised by Peter Gidal and accompanied by a booklet edited by Gidal containing interviews and criticism of the film-makers represented and providing a cross-section of views on structural film. The season thus presented a wider range of this trend of film-making and the anthology a less polemical set of terms for its analysis than had been possible at Edinburgh because of the wider scope of the notion of avant-garde adopted there and the confusion of many of the discussions.

However, it cannot be said that the immediate effect of season or anthology is to dispel the kind of confusions that dominated Edinburgh. One of the virtues of both season and anthology is the fact that Gidal aimed catholically to include representatives of most work which has been labelled 'structural' and most kinds of discussion of such work; he is at pains to point out that inclusion in either does not represent an endorsement on his part, and in his introduction, 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film' (reprinted from *Studio International* November/December 1975), he attempts to define the tendency of contemporary film-making he would support, singling it out with the qualification 'materialist' and including a much smaller group of film-makers and by no means all of the work of all of them.

Hence immediately there is a taxonomic problem. Sitney's definition, essentially based on the perception of a concern for shape and duration in these films and the use of the strategies of fixed camera, flicker, loop printing and rephotography, has been outstripped by subsequent developments of film-makers and films still classified as 'structuralist'; many of the films in the season,

for example, make minimal or no use of his strategies. Annette Michelson, discussing the New-York film-makers, notes that their films represent a break with the previous concern of American 'alternative' cinema from Maya Deren on to counterpose to the dominance of narrative in the Hollywood film a dominance of the poetic, reaching its apogee in the hypnagogic imagery of Brakhage, and that this break tends to throw film-makers back on to problems of narrative (*Anthology*, pp 38-44); Sitney's 'goal-directed duration' has clear narrative implications in a film like Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, and *La Région Centrale*, which lacks *Wavelength's* clear directional pattern, revolves (literally) around the problem of the source, the 'centre' of narration, with its unattended mechanised universally mobile camera, visible only in its shadow, its movements accompanied by aural signals, in the midst of a wilderness. Donald Macpherson's review of the Edinburgh Festival provides an analysis of Hollis Frampton's *Gates of Death* as precisely a narrative film. Deke Dusinberre, in a piece on Gidal's own *Room Film 1973* in the *Anthology* and at greater length in an article in *Afterimage* n 6 adds to this that the North-American structural film-makers' work tends to rely on metaphorical or allegorical reference and to depend on commentary to that effect such as is often provided in interviews and statements by the artist and criticism emanating from writers in close contact with the New York 'school'; their refusal of this strategy marks off the English film-makers linked to the London Film-makers' Co-op, who are, moreover, by no means homogeneous; those superficially closer to the North Americans, such as Gidal himself, represent an attempt to hew to a strictly 'structural' line, avoiding relapse into narrative or metaphor; others concentrate their work more in the projection situation as such (Malcolm Legrice, Anthony McCall); and still others have developed a variety of film-making strategies where properties or processes of the object photographed, usually a landscape, in some way dictate the structure of the film. It is thus unclear to what extent 'structural film' still constitutes, if it ever did, a valid category for the classification of a group of independently made films, and what features might be taken as central to its definition.

Peter Gidal's introduction to the *Anthology* is less concerned with taxonomy and more with defining and arguing for a strategy of his own, represented by his own work and that being done by some other film-makers in England, and by some done a few years ago now by North-American 'structuralists'. The introduction has been criticised by Anne Cottringer in *Afterimage* n 6. She attacks Gidal for falling back on the 'material' side of Wollen's material/signification opposition, and there are passages where this charge can be justified. However, the essay is complex and open to other readings. In other passages, Gidal insists that 'the assertion of film as material . . . merely sets off another level of abstract (or

120 non-abstract) associations. . . . There are myriad possibilities for co/optation and integration of filmic procedures into the repertoire of meaning ' (pp 2-3). Hence the relapses into narrative and allegory noted by Michelson and Dusinberre, and Gidal himself adds another danger: emphasis on the pure act of making the film, whether documentation of it, representation of it by marks of its absence (leader to represent the time of the changing of the magazine, etc) or marked attempts to suppress personal intervention in the process (as in minimal painting and sculpture) merely re-establish the artist as object of identification. Valuable works are those that 'escape' through the gaps left by these traps, instanced by Klee's use of the 'nearly empty signifier . . . the image taken does not have a ready associative analogue, is not a given symbol or metaphor or allegory' (p 7). This may have occurred despite the artist's own notions of his or her work, but the escape should rather be 'an adequate solution of questions correctly posed in terms of materialist practice and theoretical embodiment' (p 7). Hence the two quotations which close Gidal's film *Condition of Illusion*: first a protest from Althusser against ideologies which purport to theoretical status but are merely adapted to a goal pre-determined outside them; then a passage from a novel by Samuel Beckett on the continuing necessity to speak despite its radical impossibility. Genuine theory is required if that necessity is not continually to project the film-maker into the reproduction of ideology.

Gidal is right to emphasise the low level of theorisation of other kinds of film than narrative, and his criticisms of *Screen's* neglect in this respect are quite justified; but to demand of theory that it make possible a true reflexiveness in film as opposed to the false reflexiveness of the representation of the process is precisely to make the impossible demand – that theory should enable one to 'watch oneself watching' (p 10). The result is the tendency noted by Cottringer for the essay to fall back behind the quotations from Derrida it contains into a metaphysics of presence and consciousness of self.

Yet this comment is perhaps still too much to suggest that Gidal has made a mistake – that slightly clearer sight on his part would have put him on the right track. Rather the domination of the situation of independent film-making by the separation of aesthetic concerns and problems of distribution noted vis-à-vis the debates at Edinburgh last summer forces attempts to theorise into this problematic. The value of Gidal's work and of that of some of the other contributors to the *Anthology* is that in attempting to hold together a commitment to a revolutionary political position in film-making and the experience of film-making in the independent sector at the present time it forces these contradictions into the open and provides approaches for future work.

BEN BREWSTER.

Dear Editors,

I agree with Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell (in 'Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu', *Screen* v 17, n 2, Summer 1976) that 'the vestiges of psychological motivation . . . hover' over my remarks about Ozu in *Sight and Sound* v 44 n 3, Summer 1975. This can be attributed to a conscious effort to convince a relatively non-specialised audience that neo-humanist efforts to reject Ozu's formalism as something 'remote' from his characters were based on a fundamental failure to read the films correctly (a point I tried to demonstrate at length in Donald Richie's case). Rather than propose or pursue any *single* alternative reading of my own, I was interested in helping to clear the air so that more useful, less mystificatory readings of Ozu's films could emerge and be recognised.

I would certainly place Thompson and Bordwell's article (along with Edward Branigan's accompanying study of *Equinox Flower*) in the latter category. But much as I respect their decision to 'situate Ozu's work against a paradigm of "classical Hollywood cinema"', I question their implicit assumption that this can *only* be done by removing all 'vestiges of psychological motivation' from Ozu's artistic practice. Without believing for an instant that these motivations are easy to locate or define, particularly from a Western perspective, I think that some attempt should be made to relate Ozu's practice to his ostensible subjects, and, beyond them, to his society – an attempt which exceeds the authors' admission in their penultimate sentence that 'Ozu does not eliminate narrative'. Perhaps my description of Ozu's distanciation from his characters as 'a very special kind of intimacy' was inadequately explained, but I was alluding above all to Ozu's intimacy with his materials – materials which included not only fictional characters and actors representing them but particular aspects of Japanese society which these figures illustrate and reflect.

'Deconstructive' readings of illusionist cinema are of course essential to any fruitful theoretical work on the subject, and Thompson and Bordwell are right to give priority to Ozu's 'non-

122 narrative structures ' over the narrative structures which persist in spite of them. But any historically-based analysis of the films will have to come to terms with both, and do so in a context acknowledging the Japanese spectator as something more than an idealist model out of *L'Empire des signes* constructed to rebuke the bad habits of Occidentals. (Ben Brewster's review of *Early Spring* in *Monthly Film Bulletin* v 43 n 11, August 1976 is a step in that direction.) In a recent essay of seminal importance on the subject – 'To the Distant Observer: Towards a Theory of Japanese Film' in *October* n 1, Spring 1976 – Noël Burch presents the possibility that Japanese spectators who weep at the *Bunraku* (doll-theatre) may not be crying about characters but about dolls; if this is indeed the case, one still has to deal on some level with the fact that they *are* crying.

Stated somewhat differently, the most valuable 'deconstruction' of a narrative illusionist film would entail not only an identification of 'non-narrative' elements, but an analysis of how these function *in relation* to narrative elements – or, conversely, how the narrative elements function in relation to practices which contest, interrupt and/or 'expose' them. In a related context, the widespread misreadings of certain other narrative films identifiable as 'modernist' – *Vampyr*, *Gertrud*, *Playtime*, the recent work of Rivette – involve in nearly every case an effort to 're-adapt' these works to conventional narrative-illusionist norms of spatial and temporal continuity and other conventions promoting notions of sustained suspension of disbelief – norms and conventions which they often actively contest or resist. Yet dealing adequately with these works requires some understanding that they also foreground the same norms that they subvert by intermittently *using* them, ie showing the processes of narrative illusionism at work. What should be avoided at all cost is any automatic implicit equation of an exemplary artistic practice with the set of social and political circumstances underlying it: as Bernard Eisenschitz recently noted, 'It's as absurd to want to forget that, for instance, Jacques Tati's *Playtime* was serving the retrograde cultural politics of Malraux as to condemn this very great film on the basis of its capitalist origins.' Similarly, it is unwise to avoid the politics that Ozu's own works – 'modernist' aspects and all – were serving.

Without this understanding, one runs the risk of erecting yet another idealist model to set alongside the 'transcendental' versions of Ozu propounded by Schrader and Richie – however useful it might be in formulating a theoretical alternative to certain Hollywood procedures. (It would be preferable not to call these procedures 'classical', an over-used adjective that imbues them with an implied cultural/historical status and description [simplicity, restraint, balance, etc] which they rarely if ever deserve – at least not in relation to the presence of these values in music, literature, theatre, painting, sculpture and architecture that one

could plausibly define under that label. Decades are hardly the same thing as centuries.) Which is to say that Thompson and Bordwell's analysis is an important step towards an understanding of Ozu's work and its implications; but it is only a first step. 123

Yours in good faith,

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

To the Editor:

We are grateful for Jonathan Rosenbaum's remarks, on 'Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu', but we believe some of his comments misconceive our argument.

1. At moments he saddles us with a position we don't hold. We do not consider our essay a 'deconstruction', nor do we rest any portion of our case on Barthes's *Empire des signes*. We are more puzzled that while Rosenbaum himself quotes Barthes's book approvingly in his *Sight and Sound* article, he now seeks to link us with its presumed 'idealism'.

2. Rosenbaum wants us to analyse all aspects of Ozu's work in one essay – something he seems to have attempted in his own Ozu article for a non-specialised audience. But while it seems to us that everything is related to everything else, any single piece of research must define the primary questions it will answer. At the outset of our essay we clearly stipulate areas of Ozu's work which we provisionally bracket: the films' narrative logic (cause-effect structures, parallelisms, etc) and their use of time. We also implicitly bracket the ideological features of Ozu's films, though we certainly do not believe that the films' work lies outside ideology. What we proposed is a preliminary description and analysis of the spatial structuring of Ozu's work – one open to expansion, clarification, and contention. (Indeed, because of length limitations, we had to exclude camera movement and music from our consideration of space. We hope, however, to deal with these topics in future research.) For all these reasons, the essay frankly admitted itself to be a first step.

But we do not see that Rosenbaum would lead us to take a very secure second step. We are told that Ozu's films 'illustrate and reflect' 'particular aspects of Japanese society'. Instead of citing a systematic theory for finding this relation, Rosenbaum appeals to authority (Burch, Eisenschitz). There are many ways of explicating 'the politics that Ozu's works' served; what way does Rosenbaum suggest? Though no explicit proposals are forthcoming from Rosenbaum's letter, his essay relies on a simple reflection theory (eg, the ending of *A Hen in the Wind* is 'a reflection of Japanese history'). We would argue that there are more supple ways to relate art to society than to assume, say, that all Japanese

124 cinema must *a priori* have a causal connection to Japanese painting or *haiku*, or that themes 'reflect history'. (For the same reasons, we must confess that despite our admiration for Noël Burch's *Theory of Film Practice*, we cannot consider his recent essay on Japanese film a model of rigorous historiography.) This question is too large to deal with here, but let us suggest that whatever 'idealist' means in this context, we believe that a norm/deviation critical theory along Russian-Formalist and Czech-Structuralist lines opens up very promising ways for constructing a concrete ('materialist'?) understanding of the mediations that determine production, consumption, and style change in film history. Again, it was not the aim of this essay to fulfil this programme.

3. After asking us to discuss issues we specifically factored out of our area of inquiry, Rosenbaum misconstrues what we do say. In a sense, our essay is indeed about 'how [non-narrative] elements function in relation to narrative elements', though the essay dealt with structures rather than 'elements'. We agree that a pre-supposed norm enters a work (through framed citation or otherwise), and our essay certainly assumes that 'non-narrative' structures lose that status if there are no narrative structures to foreground them. Each example in the essay includes a description of the narrative context of spatial structures. We would also deny having an assumption, implicit or otherwise, that our study depends on 'removing all "vestiges of psychological motivation" from Ozu's artistic practices'. Our original phrase ran: 'the vestiges of psychological motivation for such spaces', and we must insist that while psychology is important for other levels of the films, it does not serve as motivation for the specific spatial devices we analyse. Rosenbaum's objection is even more puzzling in the light of a passage of his essay wherein he remarks upon 'Ozu's extraordinary assimilation of Hollywood cinema in the twenties and subtle deviations from its norms'. Our essay analyses Ozu's work from a comparable base of assumptions, though we seek to make more discriminations and examine more data than Rosenbaum was able to do in what was essentially a review of Richie.

4. Finally, we find the letter's opening paragraph curious. It seems to us that Rosenbaum should support his essay on argumentative grounds, not on the basis of putative shortcomings of his audience. The choice to write for a non-specialised audience does not exonerate the critic from using an approach he/she believes in.

We hope this response will clarify our position with respect to Rosenbaum's letter.

Yours sincerely,
KRISTIN THOMPSON
DAVID BORDWELL

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